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PAROCHIAL SERMONS,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF HEVERSHAM,

WESTMORELAND.

BY THE REV.

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"THE RECTORY OF VALEHEAD," "BISHOPRIC OF SOULS," &c.

Second Edition.

LONDON:

FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE.

1845.

LONDON :
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

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THE WAY OF LIFE.

(*Fourth Sunday in Advent.*)

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"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

The Lord is here promising to Israel a day of restoration and comfort after his afflictions, and among his promises comes this of his especially showing that people the true way in which they should walk to please Him, after forsaking the errors in which they had turned aside from the paths of his commandments, and brought his judgments upon them; He would give Israel teachers, who should attend upon him as carefully as the nurse who walks behind the child, and in the moment that he takes a wrong turn to the right hand or to the left, cries out, "No! not that way, but this is the way for you to walk in;" and so sets him continually in the right way.

This world is full of ways, as it is of men; and

one way only is right. One only is the straight way of God's commandments, that leadeth to eternal life. The rest are the ways of men, that lead to destruction; and the most deceitful of them all are those which branch off from this one, and only way, going, some of them more, some of them less in its direction, and then by a sudden turn forsaking it. So that amid the multitude of ways, many travellers through life never find the right one at all. And many, too many, after they have been graciously set upon it, forsake it for the many byways of sin, which the vile arts of Satan have contrived to seduce thereby the walkers in God's way of life to his way of destruction and death.

But the promises of God are found on his one way only; there alone their light guides amid darkness, on that alone will men meet their Saviour. And they that walk on that road, as day's journey is added to day's journey, have the comfort of thinking that they are advanced so much nearer to that day, the day of the second coming of the Lord in his power and glory, when at length all the crooked ways of man shall be abolished, and amid the wilderness of the sin of this world shall be heard the royal proclamation of his coming, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

"This is the way, walk ye in it," saith the Lord. He hath set us on the way, He hath given

us means to keep the way, and not turn to the right or left out of it. Why then should men forsake it, what excuse have they? They cannot plead ignorance. No high road in the world is plainer, and, as we have seen, there are directions at every turning. Wherever a road turns off by a way of sin, at that spot we have the Lord's direction in large letters, pointing straight onward, and saying, "This is the way." And further than this, there is also given us the direction of those turnings, and we may read if we will stay so to do at every one of them, "This is the way of sin," "This is the way to death," "This is the way to the pit."

Is it not so? Our conscience and our experience bear witness to the fact. Let us appeal to them, and hear what they say.

Thou shalt hear a word behind thee, says the text, as of a nurse directing the way of a child. And have not all of us been nursed and brought up in the knowledge and privileges of God's people; are we not all by profession children of God; and has He not done every thing for us which a father can do for his children? Has He not begun with setting us on his way of eternal life, so that we should walk in it? Is there one amongst us that does not know that Christ is the way unto the Father? that He opened this way for us by the sacrifice of his body; that He keeps it open by his ministry of intercession, by his guidance of

the Holy Spirit, and is waiting to receive at the end of it, all who shall have run with patience unto the end, and will crown them with everlasting life? This is the way. Do we not all know that it is, and also that there can be no other? Why then should any other be followed?

Will any one ask, where is the word which the text says that we hear behind us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it?" Is not this word heard on this very day? Have ye not heard his word; and does not the minister of his word set it forth on this day, publicly to all ears? May you not hear it any day, by simply opening the book in which it is written; may you not only see it, but also feel it and understand it, by seeking communion with God in prayer, and so putting yourself in company which never can lead you astray, but must needs take you along with it on its road of everlasting life and peace, even the company of the Father of all; the company of the Son, the Saviour of the world; the company of the Holy Ghost, the sanctifier and enlightener of all hearts? Do not all those utter a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left?"

That is, in every case of doubt and perplexity about the road, wherever the arts and delusion of the devil, the world, and the flesh, have confounded the doctrine of God with the teaching

of men, at every point where the adversary of our souls lies in wait to tempt us to turn aside either to the right hand or to the left, setting up his false directions, putting up at the turn to intemperance, "this is the way to joy;" at the turn to unbelief, "this is the way to wisdom;" at the turn to all foul dealing, "this is the way to prosper;" at the turn to all selfishness and hardness of heart, "this is the way to take good care of yourself." At all these places, I say, at all these perilous turns from the road, your memory, your conscience, your knowledge, your fellowship of the Spirit, your habitual communion with God in prayer, and continual application to Him for guidance, all these ought to utter a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

We should never forget our true position in this mortal life. We have to pick our way in it. The way indeed in which we ought to walk is straight enough. It is the only straight way; but let a way be ever so straight, let it be ever so well supplied with directions, yet if there be a number of ways turning out from it, a man must take good heed to his steps. If his eye be not given straight forward, if he suffer his attention to be beguiled by things on the road-side, if he be looking down on the ground as he goes on, or staring up at the sky, or gazing far and wide round about him, to say nothing of looking backward, will he not

miss his road? The best known road in the world may be missed by such want of proper attention. Can we wonder then, that the way of the Lord, straight though it be, clear and well marked though it be, should be continually missed by those who have been set upon it to walk in it to their life's end? Can we wonder at it, when we consider the unwatchfulness, the heedlessness, and inattention, with which men in general proceed on their daily walk of life? How many rise up in a morning without a thought bestowed upon their spiritual course through the day, yea, and not a few without even a word of prayer for spiritual direction and heavenly guidance. Yet send one of these men that day on a journey, will he start before he has made all preparation, ascertained the right road, diligently consulted the map or the guide-book, asked questions of those who have travelled the way, and will he not make himself quite sure of the road, where another branches off from it? All this he will do, and most carefully too. Alas! how perverse is our fallen and corrupt nature! How watchful over every thing that concerns this fleeting life: how unwatchful over every thing that concerns the everlasting life to come!

There is another direction for us, coming from the word of God, though not by direct reading, or instruction. What words do we hear behind us? what company is following

us? If it be not good company, can we be on the right road? If we hear any evil words, have we not assuredly turned off at some point or other, to the right hand or to the left? And if we rest content with hearing such language, and do not take the alarm, and endeavour immediately to find our road back again, shall we not be lost? If a person going (as he thought) towards London, heard persons behind him talking as if they were going towards Manchester, would he not be alarmed, suspecting that he had missed his way? How then can he be on the right road to heaven, who hears the company that treads on his steps, talk of very different places, of very different ends of their journey, using the language of the keeper of the eternal pit? Compare such language with the language of the direction of the word of God, with the language of the company of the children of God; to whom his nursing fathers and nursing mothers, walking behind them, say, "This is the way of the Lord, walk in it:" compare it, I say, and see whether it is not indeed a sure token of having mistaken the road of death for the road of life, and whether there can be a louder and more distinct warning to quit that way, and recover the right road as quickly as possible.

As we ought to open the day with laying our heart before the Lord, and entreating Him to direct us and keep us in the right way, so

we ought also to close the day with again laying our heart before Him, and examining ourselves, as in his presence, whether we have kept his way through that day. And whenever we find that we have turned away from it, that turning should never be forgotten, but always kept in the sorrowful remembrance of our experience, that we may never take it again. And thus, day after day, we shall learn the various turnings which deceive us on our daily walk before God; we shall have seen the falsehood of the directions which the cunning of Satan has set over them; we shall know whither they really lead, and shall never follow them again. Thus, by watchfulness and perseverance, a walk before God will become, like Enoch's and Noah's, a walk with God.

As Christians, we profess to follow Christ as the way, and to walk in his footsteps. So that not only have we his word behind us, but his glorious example before us. We not only have his direction, as of a person standing behind us, and pointing out with his hand as exactly as possible the way before us, but we have Him beckoning to us, inviting us to follow, and assuring us of the right direction of the road by having gone along the whole of it Himself, and ascended along it to heaven. Shall we not follow this way? Is it not the only way of pleasantness, the only way of

peace? All other ways are beset with robbers of our peace, with plunderers of our joy, even of this world; and with the destroyers of our peace and joy in the world to come. Here is our only safety. "There is singing for joy in the ways of the Lord[1]," says David. And, "the way of the Lord is strength to the upright[2]," says his son Solomon; all other ways, however pleasant they may seem for awhile, are ways of destruction; and the noise of the viols of their merry-making, which entices the traveller into them, is exchanged, as soon as he has gone too far to return, for the sound of lamentation, mourning, and woe.

This is the last day[3] on which our Church more especially directs us to turn our faces towards the second coming of the Lord, when the way which was directed towards Him in the perseverance of well-doing through faith shall end in glory, and every other way shall be closed with judgment. And then there can be no changing of ways. In the way in which a man is found, in that he must then continue. If it lead up to heaven, to heaven he shall go. If it lead down to the bottomless pit, to the bottomless pit he must go. And the adversary of his soul, whose misdirection he followed through life, will make his words heard indeed from behind, as he pushes him

[1] Ps. cxxxviii. 5. [2] Prov. x. 29.
[3] Last Sunday in Advent.

on towards it, and mocks him and says, "This is the way, walk thou in it."

Let not then this season of warning be lost upon any one; but let every one, giving a heedful ear to the word which Christ, the Word, spoke at his first coming, and which sounds behind us in the ages that are past, so look forward to the word, in the days to come, which He shall utter to every one as he is brought before Him, and acquit him or condemn him for ever. Blessed will they be whom He shall invite to follow Him up into his Father's house, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

SERMON II.

JOY OVER THE PENITENT.

(Third Sunday after Trinity.)

LUKE xv. 10.

"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

CAN there be more joy in heaven than there is already? Not so, perhaps: but still there may be continually fresh occasions for calling it forth. Only consider then what occasions these must be, how abundant in the mercy, how full of the glory of God! How very nearly they must touch those heavenly beings, that they should minister to their happiness in the very midst of their blessedness in the presence of the King of kings, on the throne of his glory! Such is, we are here told, the repentance of a sinner. It fills the very angels in heaven with joy. Surely then it must be an event of the greatest consequence upon earth, far greater than the rise and fall of kingdoms. What then is it? The parable which follows the text explains this to us most clearly.

Repentance means a change of heart and mind, so that a man should turn from the world and its wickedness unto God and his righteousness, hating and casting away that which he before loved, and loving and reaching after that which he before hated. Thus he quits the strange land of sin, abandons its service, and turns his face homeward towards Almighty God, his Father, who made him, and gave him every thing to make him happy. And he would have been happy if he had continued in his Father's family, and spent his substance there, where it would have brought him more substance, instead of squandering it where he did, and coming to the most wretched beggary. This return is the occasion of joy in the presence of the angels of God. Most of you must have experienced the joy of hearing from a dear brother or sister, who has been long and far absent, that he is about returning. Home has immediately put on its brightest face, and joyful preparation immediately begins for receiving the long-lost member back again into the bosom of the family. So when the sinner forsakes the evil of his ways, and turns his heart and face towards the house and family of his heavenly Father, the joy of the family in heaven immediately begins. We can imagine them saying of him, as of a younger brother, Welcome home, O my brother! Welcome, after your long absence and distant wanderings! We thought

you lost, we had well nigh given you up! Oh, therefore, doubly welcome now! Again you are become one of us; again you join the family of the children of God; again you have like affections with us. You love God our Father as we do. You long to serve Him as we do. You hate his enemies as we do. You seek his glory as we do. O welcome back again! We can now enjoy your company, for your thoughts are now our thoughts, and we have pleasure in the same things. One more is added to our blessed company. One more has been saved from the enemy, and is safe among us again. The joy of heaven is increased by the joy of one more. One heart more feels with us; one voice more swells our song of joy, blessing, and thanksgiving, before the throne.

So we may imagine the angels of God in heaven to rejoice over a sinner's repentance. They are not like that elder brother in the parable, who was jealous of his younger brother, when he saw so much made of his return. No! that elder brother was a figure of the prejudiced Jew. But the angels are all purity and love. And the more that is done for their younger brother, man, the happier are they.

At the same time we may conceive their disgust at the claims of the impenitent sinner, who thinks that heaven will receive him in the end, although never through the length of his life has he turned a serious look thither. This is too common a delusion. Too many leave the

great work of repentance so late, that they have neither the means nor time seriously to take it in hand. But they are fain to take in its place some slight acknowledgment of their past follies, and an eager application for that mercy with which they have so long trifled. And indeed in many cases there is not so much as that acknowledgment, but only a bold unfounded claim upon the love of God towards all his creatures. And with this a man is content to depart out of life, as if straight on his road to heaven.

But now conceive some member of a family, who had long disgraced it by his evil conduct, suddenly to come and knock to be admitted, without having made any resolution or promise of amendment. Conceive the answer which would be made to the unfeeling intruder. So we shall conceive what may be said by the blessed company of the children of the family of God in heaven, when that impenitent sinner thinks to come among them. There is no room for you here. You cannot possibly be one of us. Your thoughts are quite different, your affections are quite different. You have nothing in common with us, but all contrary. How can we allow you to associate with us? How can you, who have spent a life in disgracing the children of God, now join them in honour and glory? How can your mouth, which all life long was full of evil words, if not of cursings and revilings, join ours in uttering the praises

of our heavenly Father? Instead of your company bringing joy to us, it would bring shame and sorrow. Away, therefore: you are utterly unfit to be in the same place with us.

Does not all this show the vital consequence of repentance? Man's lot to all eternity turns upon it. And does it not appear strange that man should take so little care to secure for himself that in which the angels of God feel so deep an interest; and should feel no pleasure in attaining that for himself, on which the angels of God, who want nothing, experience such joy when he has attained? The parable represents all heaven as moved at the sinner's repentance. The feast of eternal life is prepared; the robe of glory is brought forth; the ring of rank and honour is produced; and the angels, the sons of God, raise the song of joy. Yet how, indeed, should this not be, when repentance is the willing answer to the call of the Son of God, the hearty acknowledgment of the preciousness of that blood which He shed for the sins of the world? Oh! is it not an occasion of joy, indeed, to good men on earth, to angels in heaven, to the whole Church and family of God, when one heart more has been awakened to the sense of the stupendous love of the Son of God? When from amidst the heap of the deadness of the sins of the world, from amidst the darkness which had come over the understanding of men, one,

even so much as one heart, has been awakened from slumber, and been illuminated with heavenly light. And the sacrifice of the Son of God has availed for one more; and the honour of his holy name is upheld by one more; and his love is answered by one more.

If it be sad, most sad, to think that Christ's blood in one single instance should have been shed in vain, by a man's treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, how joyful a thing it is when that precious blood is applied, and its cleansing effect is seen in the heart of man, by the evidence of a new life; though it be but the first breath of that life; the first motion of his hand to a good work; the first cry of his lips in the praises of his Lord and Redeemer. Is there not joy in a family when another child is born in it, and a new cry is heard in the house? How much more in the family of the sons of God, when one more, by sincere repentance and faith in the Son of God, is born into it? The new-born babe in an earthly family is received into a world of sin and sorrow, and into company which, sooner or later, must be separated by death. And yet there is joy among his brothers and sisters even at this. They look forward to many happy days with him, and hope for much help and comfort from him. But the new-born babe into the

heavenly family of the children of God, the new brother of the angels of God, is received into a world of pure innocence, unalloyed joy, and into company which never can be separated; for it shall dwell together in happiness and glory, to all eternity. All who meet there can never part again. Every one once found in his place there, abides in the same for ever. For it is sin and death which cause our separation in this world. But there they shall have been vanquished and put under foot, and in their place shall be life and immortality. And these bind together in heavenly bonds for ever and ever.

Oh! how full of mercy, compassion, and long-suffering, is God towards men! What can show it more strongly than this joy of his children in heaven, his angels, over one sinner that repenteth? Does not the joy of children manifest the pleasure of the mind of the father? If they be good and obedient children, as the angels of God are, do they not declare to us his will by all that they say or do? Is it not his will, therefore, that all should repent? We need not, indeed, the testimony of angels to tell us this; and our Lord mentions them and their joy to move our hearts, and not our understandings. The whole Word of God, from the very beginning to the end, from the first Adam down to the second Adam, is a message to this effect; that it is his will to

save man, and that He has appointed the means of salvation, and calls upon every one to lay hold of them, and put them to use, by repentance and faith. And the last messenger of all was his only-begotten Son, the Redeemer Himself, who did the work of his Father upon earth, by giving Himself a ransom for us.

Therefore, kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and so ye perish from the way. There is now no excuse for sin. The times are gone by when God winked at ignorance, and now He commandeth all men every where to repent. And none, at least amongst us, can say that he has not heard this commandment, or can mistake its meaning. The great thing to be feared is, that it has been heard so often, that the ears have become dull to it. Just as they say of the people who live at the waterfalls of the Nile, that they are so accustomed to the sound, loud and deafening though it be to the stranger, that they can in the midst of it all hear one another as plainly as we may each other in this place, and so they pay no attention to that which is the astonishment and admiration of the stranger.—So the sound of the Gospel, proclaiming forgiveness to the penitent believer, has become so familiar to the ears which have heard it all life long, that men pay no attention to it, though it be so loud, so high, in the clear and lively note of its promises, so deep in the solemn utterance of its threats, that the

heart of the stranger, the poor heathen who hears for the first time, leaps with astonishment and joy, and by his repentance stirs up the joy of the angels of God in heaven.

And it brings to our ear, and would to God it did to every heart also, the report of things which, St. Peter says, even the angels desire to look into: and in the sounds we have been hearing this morning, this report has been made to us even now. Shall we not hear and understand? Shall not he that hath repented, receive strength and courage to his faith? Will not he, who hath not come unto repentance, give for once his heart to this message of a merciful God, and listen with a willing ear to the words of his Son, who in this chapter so openly reveals to us the gracious counsel of God respecting sinful man, and even opens before our sight the gates of heaven, that we may witness the joy which is there amid its glorious company of angels of God, over every one of us that repenteth? We are objects of interest to them. Shall we not be objects of interest to ourselves? They have joy over our repentance. Shall we not have joy in repentance? It begins, indeed, in sorrow, and therefore men are unwilling to have to do with it. But it ends in joy, as surely as the night ends in day; as the winter ends in spring. And the joy is the greater for the sorrow, and that joy no man taketh away. It is beyond the

reach of his violence. It is surely fixed in heaven, where, in the songs which it sends up of praise, blessing, and thanksgiving, to Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb, it has a continual accompaniment of the joy of the angels in heaven.

SERMON III.

DUTY TOWARDS CHILDREN.

(Fourth Sunday after Easter.)

DEUT. vi. 7.

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

MOSES is proceeding in his instructions to the people of God, as to how they are to conduct themselves in the possession of the glorious inheritance to which he had called them. You have heard how much he insists on the keeping the commandments of the Lord their God; how he holds forth promises to them; how he threatens them; how he reminds them of what he had done for them; warns them against the forgetfulness of him; stirs them up to the remembrance of him; and, as in the words of the text, bids them not only observe these commandments themselves, but also to be most diligent in bringing up their children in the same.

Israel has been set forth as a pattern to ourselves: but we are put into possession of an inheritance as much superior to that of Israel's, as spiritual to temporal, as Christ to Moses. And our Leader, Christ, has given us statutes to keep, and ordained us a service to perform in the land to which He has brought us; and these are to be our employment: these the fathers are to teach to their children, and these the faithful are to talk of when they sit in their house, when they walk by the way, and when they lie down, and when they rise up. In short, the Christian life is to be made up of the continual and diligent keeping of them.

By the keeping of them we must keep our place in the glorious inheritance of his Church, to which we have been called. If ye love me, keep my commandments, was one of his last commandments. And among his gracious promises He says, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love[1]." And in these, and several other passages of St. John, the keeping of the Lord's commandments is considered as the great proof of the love of Him.

Now, are these commandments attended to with that diligence which manifests the love of Christ in the heart? Does his Church contain a

[1] John xv. 10.

body of servants all purposed in their hearts to live in them, and by them? Are we ourselves making them the guide of our understandings, the controller of our affections, the rule of our life? This is an important question, if, as is surely the case, the continuance of our abode in the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, the Church of the first-born, depends upon it.

Now these commandments are of two classes. In one, are those which concern our duty to God; in the other, those which concern our duty towards our neighbour. And we must begin with those that concern God, and then those that concern our neighbour will come of course. But how do men commonly keep them? They begin with those which concern their neighbour. And then what wonder if they never go on to those which concern God? And why do they begin with those which concern their neighbour? Because life cannot be safe or comfortable without the keeping of them; because the rules of society require it; because the laws of the land demand it. But what thank have such keepers of God's commandments. Do they keep them for the sake of the love of Christ? No. Do they keep them for the sake of the love of themselves? Yes. And yet persons who neglect all the commandments which concern God, and keep those which concern their neighbour only for the sake of their own convenience; and therefore, as far as

their own convenience goes, and not one step further, will think that they are doing their duty as Christians. And if they bring up their family thus respectably, think that they have fulfilled their duty to God, and amply exemplified the words of the text, "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

But now see what a different kind of teaching, indeed, is this which the text sets before us! If children were but heirs of this world, and had nothing to do with the Church of God and promises of Christ, a worldly education would be enough. But they are heirs of the world to come; they have been baptized into the Church of God; they have been admitted into a covenant of everlasting life; and therefore their education must be spiritual; and therefore their educators must be spiritual; and therefore their parents have in them a vast and important charge to bring them up as children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. They must themselves be examples of following Christ in a godly life, according to his commandments; they must exhibit in themselves the love of Christ, without which there is no keeping his commandments; they must glorify their Father which is in heaven, so that their children may know Him to be their Father; they must give continual proof of their faith in the Son of God, that their children may learn to be sons of God; and they must walk according to the Spirit,

that their children may be spiritual, after their teaching and example.

In short, our grand duty to our neighbour, is to help him in his duty towards God. How much then in the case of children? And indeed every one, whether he be father or not, has something or other to do with his younger brethren in the Church; and his example is moving them either for good or for evil. Let the man of full-grown understanding, who has therefore come to the full measure of his responsibility, bear in mind that go where he will in the presence of the Church of God, the eyes of Christ's little ones are upon him; and if they shall learn from him evil, instead of good, how great will be his condemnation! Has not Christ Himself said of children, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea[2]?" What then if children shall learn of a man to neglect that blessed Lord's very day, and to think lightly of the duty of prayer and praise in his name; and if he be their parent too, how dreadful is it to think of the account which must be rendered at the judgment-seat of Christ! And how dreadful on the last day will it be to stand together on the left hand amid the goats, the child perhaps cursing the father with curses of unutterable

[2] Matt. xviii. 6.

hatred for having brought him there, and been so false to the charge which was given him of bringing him up as a sheep of the flock of Christ to stand upon his right hand!

It is a miserable thing to see in every neighbourhood the neglected state of those who are between boyhood and manhood: this, too, at an age the most important of all as to deciding the future course of life for good or evil, for Christ's service or Satan's. They are left to their own devices, when they most need control and constraint. Such a state of things should not be; and parents and heads of families have much to answer for, where so great a duty is neglected as the looking to the spiritual state of such persons, and showing them the way in which they should go. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," are the words in the text, with which Moses charges Israel. How much more strictly still does Christ charge the Christian! And how much more has the Christian to answer for!

Besides the work of our own salvation, we are all charged with handing down that work to others who come in succession after us. We must not live to ourselves, we must not die unto ourselves; but whether we live or die, we must be the Lord's, and our work must be his work. The world is not carried on by fathers bringing up children to walk in their steps after them, more surely than the Church of

Christ is carried on by spiritual fathers bringing up spiritual children to walk in the ways of eternal life. One hands down to the other the lamp of faith in Christ, that it may burn and give light until the end of all things, when the Sun of righteousness shall re-appear.

But most men are slow to acquaint themselves with the value of that which they have thus to deal forth in faithful stewardship: they do not consider that its ministry is the reversal of the sentence of eternal death, the assurance of the inheritance of eternal life, the announcement of a Saviour from our sins, the proclamation of a Redeemer from our captivity, the good news of the victory over the grave and triumph over hell, the manifestation of the cross of Christ bearing the sacrifice for our sins, and the office of the harbinger of his way, as He is preparing to come at the last day in great glory with all the company of heaven in his train, and in all the majesty and power of his everlasting kingdom.

Such a stewardship is surely a glorious office, one which should fill the heart with delight and joy in its faithful fulfilment. It is a trust of unutterable importance. It is the main part of the kingly office of the Christian. Should we not then expect to see it performed with all zeal and diligence in the Church of God? And when it is neglected or discharged indolently, can everlasting life, with all its inexpressible glories,

be sufficiently prized? can the Giver of it, with all his unfathomable depth of love, be sufficiently thanked? can everlasting death in hell be sufficiently dreaded and abhorred? How earnestly does the text press the due performance of the commandments of God—"Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up!" Thus the whole life of the man of God, out of doors and in doors, in his chair and in his bed, is to be occupied with the performance of his commandments, and with the teaching them, either by example or precept, to his children.

This duty is the charter by which he holds the possession of his place in the Church of God. According as he performs it, he will be put down lower or set up higher in his rank of stewardship while here, and be an outcast or a dweller in his kingdom of the world to come. No man must think of himself only; no man of his own salvation only. If he be a living member of Christ's body, then he must take an interest in the welfare of his fellow-members. And if a man will not exercise the very lowest and negative part of this duty, merely that part which requires of him to give no offence, to put no stumbling-block by careless conversation in the way of the children whom Christ says that He takes an interest in, how shall he perform

the higher part, which requires of him to show the positive example of a bright and burning light, and to teach them diligently, according to his relation to them, whether he be father, or master, or neighbour?

And let every one remember that his example is daily teaching some one or other, however he himself may not be aware of it; therefore he must be watchful to see that it do not pull down, like an enemy of the edifice of the Temple of Christ's Church, instead of building up, as a wise master-builder, on the foundation which is laid in Christ Jesus. How can we be servants of Christ without fulfilling this service? and how can we be faithful stewards of his good things, if we be not careful against dealing forth our own evil things instead, out of the treasure of a corrupt heart, and to the destruction instead of the welfare of those by whom we are surrounded in our daily conversation?

O that all eyes were open to the sight of the station of glorious privilege, and therefore of awful responsibility, which they hold in the Church of God! O that all ears were open to the strict charge with which all such have been charged! May Christ, who is our Head, sanctify by his grace our hearts to the pondering of that portion of their duty which was set by Moses before the people of God in the lesson of this day, and keep us evermore in his Church, both of this world and of the world to come everlasting!

SERMON IV.

NO BACKWARD LOOKS.

(First Sunday in Lent.)

GEN. xix. 26.

"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

THIS judgment, which befel the wife of Lot, is a very plain proof of the displeasure of God against those who will not follow the way of salvation, where God has made it clear and open for them; yea, and even led them by the hand along it. What assurance more could she have wanted? The angels had positively assured Lot and his family of the destruction which was coming; they had even led them with their own hands out of it; they had strictly charged them not to delay a single moment, no, not so long as to cast one look behind, so suddenly would the judgment of the Lord come. But Lot's wife forgot these things in her unwillingness to quit a place where she had lived so many years, where she

had passed so many happy days, where she had so many friends, acquaintance, and kinsmen; she thought more of them than of God; she desired their company, though God had cast them off; she had rather return to those sinners, than follow the way shown by the angels of God. So she lingered behind her husband, unwilling to go forward; and when she should have set her face forward, to go on the way of salvation, as God had ordered, she turned to look behind on the city of destruction; and in that moment the judgment of God smote her, and she became a pillar of salt.

Our blessed Lord Himself made use of her doom as an example to his disciples, when He admonished them to flee from the wrath to come. He warned them of the suddenness of his coming, sudden as the lightning which comes and goes, before you can begin to count the moments, and telling them that the judgment should come as suddenly as in the days of Lot, and overtake men as it did then in the very midst of their amusement and business, while they were eating and drinking, buying and selling; He bade them make haste for their lives, and not to think of turning back, but to remember Lot's wife.

Now we have all a judgment to escape from, we have all a destruction to run from, and we run for our life indeed, for it is our everlasting life that is in danger. The Son of

man is coming to judge the world, to destroy the wicked in the midst of their sins, and by a destruction which shall go on to all eternity. He has assured us that this terrible day will come, and take all men suddenly; in an hour that men think not, He will come; but He would not have one of us overtaken by the terrible destruction; therefore He has done every thing to deliver us from it, if we be but willing to be saved. As He warned Lot and his family, so He has warned us. As He led them out of the city by the hand, so He has taken us by the hand. Has He not done all to save us? He gave Himself up to God's justice a sacrifice for our sins; He sent his Holy Spirit to inform our hearts with heavenly wisdom, to teach us to seek a better country, to warn us against lingering and turning back to look upon this, which will be destroyed by the blast of his displeasure.

He has taken us by the hand, and led us forth. Has He not? All they that were left behind in the city knew not what was coming; and, even if they had known, would not have had time to escape, nor would have known whither to escape. But has not every Christian been warned of the coming of the day of judgment? Is it not expressly mentioned among those articles of belief in which he has been instructed up from a child, that "thence He shall come to judge the quick and the

dead." Has he not, by his Baptism and Christian education, been brought out of the city of destruction, by being thus set apart from the rest of mankind, who are left in the darkness of the ignorance of that destruction which is coming upon the world? Has he not by the knowledge of salvation which the Lord has given, by the gifts and graces which He has bestowed, by the privileges with which He has endowed him, taken him by the hand and led him? Yes, this is the peculiar act of his grace, according to which He styles Himself the good Shepherd. This He is doing daily; for this He has appointed the ministry of under-shepherds, to speak, and teach, and warn, and lead, in his name, as I endeavour to do among you at this moment. He has taken you all by the hand. You must have felt its grasp; you must have heard his voice, in the many warnings which you have had in many ways, in the many good resolutions which, I trust, He has put into your hearts, in the many appeals which He has made to your conscience. And He has led you forth and set you in his Church, and having brought you into it, says, "Now escape for your lives; look not behind you at the wicked world from which I have separated you. Cast not a fond and lingering look at the things which you have left. Stay not in the plain, in the low spot of earthly desires, but flee unto the hills, seeking high

and heavenly things, and fix thyself upon the lofty rock of salvation. Hell is behind thee: Heaven is before thee. Run forward; look not back; escape for thy life."

But it is this looking back that undoes all. And therefore observe how our Lord, both with his own mouth, and through that of his Apostles, continually and strongly warns us against it. Our Lord says, "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God [1]." And again, "If any man come to me, and hate not (*i. e.* do not love less than me) his father and mother, wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple [2]." And St. Paul says, "But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus [3]." So that our Christian calling is in fact a race, from destruction to salvation; from chains of bondage and shame to crowns of life and glory; from earth, which the Son of Man is coming in judgment to destroy, to Heaven, which is the everlasting seat of his glorious kingdom. No man in an earnest race looks back. He is in great danger of losing it, if he does. No man escaping from destruction

[1] Luke ix. 62. [2] Luke xiv. 26. [3] Phil. iii. 13.

turns to look back with regret upon it. He is mad if he does. So we must have our face forward, and keep it there. A look back may be our destruction.

They that keep their faces forward, are they who are thoroughly convinced of the coming of God's judgment upon the sinners of this world, and therefore would not be found among them. They are not only convinced of this judgment, but agree in its justice; and loving the commandments of the Lord, according to that which He Himself said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," hate all disobedience to them, both in themselves and in others, and therefore hate the sight of the sins from which they are fleeing, and would not on any account turn back a look of regret upon them at forsaking them. They know that their business is to go on unto perfection, giving all diligence, to add to their faith virtue: and to virtue knowledge: and to knowledge temperance: and to temperance patience: and to patience godliness: and to godliness brotherly loving-kindness: and to brotherly loving-kindness charity [1]. Their resolution is made: their purpose is fixed. And it is this; having come out from among the people of the spiritual Babylon, the city of sin and destruction, whose sins have reached unto heaven, and whose

[1] 2 Pet. i. 5.

iniquities God hath remembered, never, never, to be found in it again, that they be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues. They long not for any thing which they have left in her; for they have cast it off. They think it no sacrifice to abandon all in her in which they once took delight. They have counted the cost. And they count all for nothing, all for the vilest of things, in comparison with the unsearchable riches of Christ. They expect continually the judgment of the Lord upon the places of sin, and cannot feel themselves safe for a moment in their neighbourhood. God, in his infinite mercy, through his Gospel, hath brought them forth out of the city of sin and judgment, and hath bidden them not to stay in the neighbouring plain. Shall they therefore stay in the neighbouring plain, within the seeing and hearing of the sights and sounds of sin, and also within the reach of the destruction which is coming upon them? Shall they trifle and tamper with those many things of this world, which, though they be not directly, and in themselves, sin, yet lie close in its neighbourhood, and lead directly to it, and are indeed but subtile temptations laid in the way by Satan, and are like traps and snares laid for beasts, which are so covered as to look like the rest of the ground? They flee therefore determinedly, and as far from them as possible. Thus they abandon all that they

have left, they forget all in which they once took delight, because now suffering themselves to be led by the hand of the Lord, and listening with obedient attention to his warning, they have found that all conversation with them was with sin, and that the end of those things was death and dreadful judgment to come. They would not loose the grasp of the hand of that their Saviour, but they cling faster and faster to it, every day finding in Him a more powerful Saviour, in proportion as they grow in conviction of the danger of the state of sin, and of the gloriousness of the promised inheritance of the city of God in the kingdom of the world to come.

Thus not only is no look cast back, but all looks are cast forward, for there lies all that they desire, there are the means of grace, there is the hope of glory, there is the end of the race, where the righteous Judge is waiting to crown every runner as he comes in, and to give him rest from his labours in his everlasting mansions. Thither, as they look forward, all the promises of God grow more clear and certain, all their hopes brighter, their heavenly treasures more secure, their everlasting inheritance more assured. Will they turn back from such a view, to look on the city of sinful misery which they have left? If they could, they would indeed be ruined.

But who are they who look back? This,

alas! is a much larger class than the former. It contains all who still retain any longing for any thing of that sinful conversation which they have once forsaken. It contains all the double-minded, all the irresolute, all that are wavering in their choice between this world and the next, all that are willing indeed in the spirit, but do not stand up and manfully resist the weakness of the flesh. They acknowledge the danger of a state of sin; they confess the mercy of the Lord in having brought them forth by the hand into the ground of his Church and Gospel, where they might be saved, if only they will keep his word, with which He has so strictly charged them; but they cannot make up their minds to leave all and follow Him. They cannot forget all the delights which corrupt flesh finds in the city of sin and destruction. Do we not too often find examples of this in others, if not in ourselves? Do we not see a man sometimes forsaking a besetting sin for a while, and seeming to be quite determined to be rid of it for ever? He forsakes all its haunts and familiar places. But after a time he either thinks himself strong enough to resist the temptation, or gives way in unwatchfulness to some secret longing, or, it may even be, to some sudden burst of his corrupt passions; and he is led to look back upon the places that he has left. The very next and most certain thing is to visit them

again; and the next, and equally certain is, to wallow in their mire more than ever. And thus this man's last state is worse than his first. And in this state perhaps he is suddenly cut off by the judgment of God.

We must not be lookers on for a moment where any sin is going on. That one look may make us its slaves for ever; and even if we partake not in the sin (which indeed is not possible, for he that allows it his countenance, must surely abet it), we shall have our share in the judgment. Do we not continually meet with examples, in the case of riots, for instance, where the unoffending spectators are mixed in the same destruction as comes upon the rebels? Yes, and not undeservedly so. They are not really unoffending. They had no business there. Their presence gave encouragement to the riot. The rioters took them, of course, (as they did not resist them in their resistance to law,) to be their friends and abettors, and therefore were more daring than they would otherwise have been; so if man's justice could have distinguished them from the rioters, it would have punished them notwithstanding. It is so also in God's judgments: He will allow no one to look upon an act of sin, and at the same time reckon him innocent of it; but He will set his portion with the most wicked among them, and raise him up in the same company to judgment. So many

disgraceful scenes would not take place as they do, in every neighbourhood, if they were not encouraged by these backward looks of such as know better.

Let all, then, remember Lot's wife, how and why she became a standing visible monument of the judgment of God, with which He will visit not only upon actual sin, but also upon all who turn back to look upon sin; when, as Christians, they have professed, and vowed, and promised to forsake it. Our Church intended especially to warn us against it at this season [5]. God grant that she may not have warned in vain!

First Sunday in Lent.

SERMON V.

THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION.

(*Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.*)

LUKE vii. 14.

"And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise."

WHAT an example is here of the gracious loving-kindness of the Redeemer of the world! what a glorious earnest of the putting forth of his power at the last day by the resurrection of the dead! To the poor weeping widow He restores her last and lost worldly hope and comfort, in her revived son, her only child. To all beholders, He manifests the stupendous spectacle of the dead returning to life, not through the power of prayer to God, as of Elijah's before Him, and of Peter's after Him, but by power of very command as very God, the Son of God. "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." As He said also on another occa-

sion, "Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise." And as at the last day He will say, "Return, ye children of men." Let me endeavour to improve the blessed occasion of (our) having this remarkable work of our Lord brought (so conspicuously) before our notice, (and offered so directly to our attention on this day.

Observe the circumstances mentioned in the text. Jesus touched the bier. Why was this? Our Lord almost invariably accompanies his miracles with some sign, proper to the occasion. So here He touches the bier, as if He would say, "Bearers! stop! there is no need of your going further on to the grave. For you shall not be bearing a dead corpse a moment longer. The man shall return to the city of the living together with you, alive as you are." And the bearers, suddenly struck with his sign of authority, stood still. Then He addressed the young man in these words, the like of which shall ring at the last day through all the vaults and sepulchres of the earth, and all the depths of the sea, and the dead shall hear the voice of his trumpet and arise. And then the bystanders saw the colour return to the cheeks, the eyes open, the lips move, the breast heave, and all the rest of the signs of returning life in a shorter time than I have mentioned them, and Jesus delivered him to his mother.

How many of us would have been delivered from tears of sorrow and groans of anguish,

if the Redeemer had thus interposed with his quickening might, to shut the mouth of the grave against some beloved member of our family or kindred! But the time is only delayed, and we meanwhile, are warned to prepare for that day which will come to us, even as it has come to them. Let us then consider our own condition, and let the words of the text be the guide to serious thoughts and heavenly affections.

They give a particular instance of the merciful dealing of our Redeemer. Let us go on from it to a general example. Has He not delivered the whole body of mankind from death, and that death not only of the body, but of the soul and spirit? For man lived once in the city of God, where is the palace of his presence, and the Church of his saints, whose people are the elect of God, and whose gates are righteousness. He had angels for fellow-citizens, and God for his governor. But he sinned, and he died. So he was carried out as a corpse, full of corruption, hateful to all the living spirits there; and the pit of the grave was dug for him, the deep and bottomless pit of everlasting destruction. But as they were carrying him out, when they had now borne him far onward to the grave, the Son of God met them; and He had compassion. He stopped the bearers to destruction; He bade man arise, and return to the city of

the living once again, and make there his everlasting habitation.

And thus He still speaks, and these are still his words to all that are dead in trespasses and sin: "I say unto thee, Arise." These are his words from sunrise to sunset, wherever his Gospel is heard. "Arise, and be restored to the immortal family of God, and by repentance make joy for the angels in heaven. Arise, and live for ever in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. God willeth not the death of a sinner, but that he should have everlasting life."

Truly all must arise from the death of sin in this body, who would arise to everlasting glory in the body to come. The state of sin is a state of death. The eyes of the dead man are shut to the sight of the wondrous works of God. He sees not the glory of the sun, and is blind to all that is revealed by the light of the day. His ear is deaf to every sound; and even if he could hear a voice, he could not move his body to obey it. He is a lifeless lump, which by corruption shortly becomes offensive to the health of the living, and must be removed out of the way. It is even so as to the state of sin; it blinds the spiritual eye to the sight of God's glory in the world to come. God and his only-begotten Son, and his everlasting Spirit, angels, and all the sons of God, heaven and all its happiness and glory,

yea, and hell with all its misery and shame, are hidden from the man that abides in sin. Nor, if he could, would he endure to see them. Nor can his nostrils draw in the scent of the sweet-smelling sacrifice of the Son of God, nor the fragrance of the fruits of the holiness of the Spirit. Still less can he hear the voice of the commandments of God, or utter the sounds of his praise. And less still can he raise heart or hand to accomplish any one thing of the will of God. What can be done with him? His corruption is unendurable to the living sons of God. Surely, if he be not called into life, he must be removed out of the way into the pit of corruption.

One or the other of these must be done: eternal life or eternal death must be his lot. To eternal death the bearers are bearing him; and those bearers are the darling sins, the engrossing temptations, the blinding delusions of the world, the flesh, and the devil. To eternal life the Son of God is calling him in his compassion, saying, "Son of man, I say unto thee, Arise." O may that voice, which shall raise the dead at the last day, be heard in the hearts of all sinners, and awake them from their state of death! "Arise," He says. Does any one ask, "How shall I arise? You compare me with the dead. How can they arise of themselves? What then is the use of telling me to arise?" But had that young

man the power of rising in himself? Assuredly not. But in the moment that Christ spoke the words, he had. And thus the excuse of the sinner is of no avail. Christ has spoken the words; He has said, "Arise." And thus He has given the power of rising. Henceforward none can say, I cannot do this, and I cannot do that. All that will, have the power to do the commandments of God, through Christ enabling them.

The rising from the death of sin is indeed painful; but the return of life to any benumbed part is, as we all well know in our bodily experience, exceedingly painful. The cold and empty veins are sorely fretted by the warm rush of the returning tide of blood. The change is extreme from the dulness of torpor to the stirring activity of life. And such is the change which the deadened and benumbed spirit of the sinner undergoes during the process of repentance. For repentance is the change of the inner man, in his thoughts, affections, and desires, the turning from the sins of the world unto holiness in Jesus Christ, the loving that which before seemed unlovely, and hating that which before seemed pleasant. There is therefore all the pain that arises from the opposition of the elements within the man. As the life-giving spirit quickens that which is decayed, through the fraud and malice of the Devil, and through the long operation of his

carnal will and frailness, all is full of pain and soreness. The awakened conscience is sore, feeling now what it never felt before, the prickings of conviction in the presence of Almighty God, the searcher of the heart, and judge of all mankind. The heart is sore with terror of the judgment to come, and with sorrow at lost time, and the long grieving of a merciful God. The head is sore, from lively remembrance of past offences, from an enlightened understanding of the majesty, power, and justice of God. The will is sore from the fretting of the unusual yoke of self-denial. In short, if the return of life to the body have, as we know it has, all the pain of death, even so the awakening to the life of righteousness is accompanied with all the pain of the death unto sin.

But this continues for only the first stage of repentance, in which the spirit departs from this world, in the change of its affections. Far different is the feeling when it comes into the presence of God, in the second stage, through the access in Jesus Christ our Lord. When the young man to whom Christ spoke the words, "I say unto thee, Arise," having risen, and recovered from his amazement, was restored to his mother, and had returned a living man into his native city, whence he had been carried out dead, what joy was there in his heart to see in good health and full strength

again, the very chamber in which he had died, perhaps after a weary and painful illness, to salute and be saluted by those kinsmen and friends to whom he had bidden, as he and they thought, a long and last farewell, to see the loved and familiar objects from which sickness had divided him long, and death seemingly for ever! And what joy was there among his friends to see him, who had been carried out a pale, worn, senseless corpse, return bright in the colour of health, strong in the full form and upright stature of his better days, and lively with all the vigorous activity of youthful body and mind! They who had but an hour or two ago met to eat and drink in the bitterness of sorrow at his funeral, may now have sat down to a feast of joy upon his recovery.

And yet how faint, describe it as we will, is all this joy! how cold the congratulations! how poor and scanty the feast, compared with the joy, the congratulations, the feast which wait upon him, who having risen from the death of sin, enters in spirit into that heavenly city, where man was originally born, the everlasting Church of God in heaven and earth! How deep the joy to see again that which had been lost from sight; to see God in all his revealed majesty and glory; to feel Him in all his freely bestowed mercies, and abundant benefits; to hear Him in all his gracious promises; to

abide in the continual presence of his Saviour, and to follow the leading of his Holy Spirit! And at the same time all this is increased by the very remembrance of his former state of spiritual sickness and death. And how hearty the congratulations, when angels are they that rejoice, to hear "he was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found!" And how abundant and rich the feast of spiritual meat and drink!

Such is the resurrection from the death of sin. If our Lord said, "Weep not," when He was about to restore the only-begotten son to the widow, O what a wiping away of all tears shall there be from every eye; what a turning of mourning into laughter, when they that died unto sin and rose unto righteousness, having died in Christ, shall be raised from the grave, and admitted as sons of God, children of light, heirs of glory, into the everlasting city, the heavenly Jerusalem, and be made fellow-citizens with the saints for ever! Here is a prospect to comfort all hearts that believe in Christ delivered for our offences, and risen again for our justification. To them death has indeed lost its sting, and the grave its victory. What need they fear from this world which passeth away? what may they not hope from the world which endureth for ever?

Let all then hear the words of their Saviour Christ, "I say unto thee, Arise." Let all

arise; let none dishonour God any longer by a worldly careless life; let none forget God any longer by a worldly careful life; but let all care be spent on God, and all care be cast on God. "Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light[6]," says the apostle of Christ. Will any one prefer death and darkness rather? They could not, if they would but know, in this their day, what death and darkness are; and would consider that they who choose the death in sin, rather than the death unto sin, and prefer the darkness of the ignorance of this world, which knows not Christ, to the light of the world to come, and will not receive Him as the life and light of men, can have no portion in the glory hereafter. There must be no more trifling with time, no more doubtfulness between the service of two masters, both of whom a man cannot possibly serve; but his service must be resolutely refused, who makes the vilest slaves of his servants, and gives them a place in the bottomless pit for their wages, when they have done their task-work of sin in this world: and His service must be determinedly taken up who calls his servants his brethren and friends, who, when their time of service in this world shall have run out, and they shall rest from their labours in the grave, then, when the last faithful

[6] Eph. v. 14.

servant, for whom a place has been prepared in his Father's house, shall have done his work, shall give the word and signal of the resurrection to eternal life, of which we have already heard the earnest in these words, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise."

SERMON VI.

STEADINESS AT OUR POST.

(*Ninth Sunday after Trinity.*)

1 Kings xix. 9.

"And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there: and behold the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?"

This question is put twice to Elijah, and it is well worth our while to examine the answer which Elijah both times makes to it. Elijah, in fact, prophet though he was, and chief prophet too under the old covenant, was still a man with man's infirmities. And although he was so honoured by his heavenly Master as to be made the type of John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Christ to come, and instead of dying like other men, ascended gloriously into heaven, and afterwards appeared in glory in company with Moses and Christ on the Mount, yet here the Lord rebukes him, though gently, with all the kindness of a

master who had been well and faithfully served in the main. But in one point he had failed. He had been wonderfully supported in his helpless situation when he appeared one and alone against the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of the grove. And the signal victory which the Lord there gave him against such fearful odds, ought to have put such confidence in his heart, that he should have boldly stood his ground against Jezebel herself, and rebuked her to her face; but instead of so doing he fled the country, and betook himself to the kingdom of Judah, and thence into the wilderness.

The Lord, however, did not forsake his servant, though he had forsaken his post. But He had compassion on him, and remembered him, and supported him by a miracle against hunger and thirst in a land where was neither bread nor water. But still the Lord would not let him suppose that he had done altogether right; and therefore twice he asked him that question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" As much as to say, "Thou oughtest not to be here, in the wilderness, where are no men, and therefore thou canst not be about my business, which has to do with the hearts and acts of men. Thou oughtest to be following up the glorious success which my arm wrought for thee, and going forward in the

confidence of the faith with which it should have inspired thee. Thou oughtest not to have been terrified at Jezebel's message, but to have trusted in my arm to deliver thee."

But now observe what answer Elijah gives to these questions, and see how in the very best of men the heart is deceitful. The prophet had persuaded himself that he was doing right, and was not running away from his post from fear of Jezebel, but giving it up in just disgust at the irreclaimable conduct of the children of Israel; that a jealousy for God's insulted glory, and not the fear of Jezebel's vengeance, had driven him into the wilderness. So he answers each time, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." In which words observe how his conscience, after all, lets out the true reason, though his heart will not put it forward as the reason.

Now all this is very instructive, and is one, indeed, of those examples which warn us that Scripture "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works[1]." The

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 17.

example of the infirmities of such eminent servants of the Lord, as David and Elijah, is written to put us, who live in the latter days and on whom the ends of the world are come, continually upon the watch. And most assuredly, with the fruits of so much and great experience put into our hands, we ought, as men of God, to be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. Let us then apply the Lord's question to ourselves, "What doest thou here?"

This we ought to ask of ourselves at all times—"What am I doing here? Am I where the Lord has posted me, or only where my own corrupt heart has placed me? Am I doing my own will or the will of the Lord?" O what a sad answer would the conscience of the multitude, if only it was awake, give to this question. But the conscience is asleep to the word of the Lord, and the heart is awake to its own desires, and with its usual deceitfulness gives a false answer; yea, even may go so far as to pretend the Lord's service, for the accommodation of its own vile, self-seeking spirit; jealousy for the Lord's glory, for the gratification of its own corruption.

O that we had at all times a heart to hear that awful question of the Lord, which He puts to all his servants, "What doest thou here?" and that our conscience would answer it so truly, that we may so judge ourselves

here, that we be not judged of the Lord at the last day! "What doest thou here?" What answer shall be given to this by him who is now far from the house of the Lord, intent upon his own ungodly amusement? How shall he answer to this, who at any time is sitting in the company of swearers, or drunkards, or profane and loose talkers? How shall he answer to this, who is knowingly, deliberately, going on the course of any sin, or in the neglect of any positive duty? O what a sudden stop would there be to the viol and the dance, and to every sound of vain pleasure; how would the horse be checked in the midst of the race; how would the dice fall from the hands of the gambler; how would the cards from the hands of the idler; how would the cup from the hands of the drunkard; how would the actor be stopped in the midst of his speech; the spectators in the midst of their enjoyment; how would the book of novels, or idle tales and gossip of this world, drop from the hands of its reader; how would the babbler stop short in his news of the day; how would the saunterer be startled in the midst of his indolence; what a sudden, awful, breathless silence would prevail through theatres, exchanges, places of public amusement, resorts of idleness and vanity, retirements of unprofitable indolence and indulgence, if the Lord, in a voice of thunder from heaven, should

ask of each, "What doest thou here?" and every eye should see Him seated on the throne of his glory, as He will be seen by every eye, when on the last day He shall ask each, "What had he been doing all his life?" What answer could they give? What excuse could they plead? How different would that be from the words of Elijah, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts!" Would it not be, if the truth, "I have been very jealous for the prince of this world? I have been maintaining his altars, encouraging his prophets; his altars, at which is continually offered the sacrifice of a corrupt heart; his prophets, which are continually crying peace where there is no peace?"

"What doest thou here?" There is the question which every hour requires an answer from him that would watch against temptation. Is not the heart of man, through its natural corruption and infirmity, always likely to lead him astray from the ways of the Lord, to carry him away from his post of duty into the wilderness of error and sin? Can he then be too watchful over its issues? There it is that Satan takes up his ground; there he lays his snares, sets his stumbling-blocks, spreads his nets, digs his pits; there he prompts man with false excuses, and supplies him from his inexhaustible treasure-house of lies; there he transforms himself into an angel of light, and

deceives a man into a notion that he is serving the Lord when he is only serving himself; so that he should say, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts." And if his own true servants, even such as his principal of prophets, Elijah, are not safe from the promptings of their natural corruption, but may be, and are, led aside by it from the straight path of strict duty to the Lord, what will become of those who are living in a state of utter unwatchfulness? Will the Lord sustain them in the wilderness of their disobedience; or will He not rather let them perish there as did all Israel except two persons, who alone stood true to their posts as the Lord's faithful servants, and entered into the promised land of rest?

But you all know that in matters of this world, a very common answer to the question, "What doest thou here?" is, "Why, what have I to do?" But will this be an answer in things of the world to come? Can any of you say so? Can any of you say that you know not what you have to do as servants of the Lord? Must you be put in mind of what He requires of you? Do you need to be told that you must worship the Lord your God, and Him only must you serve? And you must worship Him in spirit and in truth, not with mere lip-service, not with the sacrifice which comes from neither mercy nor obedi-

ence, but with a sincere, contrite, and thankful heart: and you must serve Him with your lives.

"Why, what have I to do?" Can such an answer proceed from the heart of any one calling himself Christian? Have not body, soul, and spirit, called to the work of salvation with fear and trembling, everything to do, because everything is at stake? See how busy the children of this world, the servants of its service, are about their work. Their master has little cause to ask them, "What doest thou here?" They are doing, there and then, all that he requires of them to do; and they are never weary of doing it. See how hard they work, and how all their mind, and all their talk, is concerned about it: truly they are wise in their generation. And shall the work to be done for the salvation unto eternal life, be done much less, very much less, effectually than the work to be done for the preservation of this life? Shall it even be much less understood in the first instance? Do not all know that it must begin with repentance from sin, and conversion unto God? that it must go on in all watchfulness and prayer, in seeking the Lord's will to do it, in drawing nigh unto Him that He may draw nigh unto us? that this work is a continued process of death unto sin, and new life unto righteousness? So that the true Christian is dying daily, by daily

mortifying his members which are upon earth, resisting all their unruly affections and desires, and by daily crucifying the old man with his affections and lusts; daily he prays for grace through the Holy Spirit; daily he receives grace; daily he puts it to account with a deep and due sense of its preciousness, and of how much, in consequence, he has to answer for; daily he lays his account before his Master, and implores forgiveness, both for what he has done and for what he has left undone: and, all through the day, his ear hears the still small voice of his Lord enquiring of him, and saying, "What doest thou here?" And he can say from an honest heart and lively conscience, "I am very jealous for the Lord God of hosts. I am employed about the work of his honour and glory, and which is also, through his infinite mercy, the work of my own salvation. I am a sheep following the good Shepherd who hath bought me. I am his beast, bearing his yoke, and I find it easy. I am his servant, bearing his burden, and I find it light. I find it good to be here."

Happy are they who can return such an answer to this awful question. And why should you not all be thus happy? Why should any one go on in forgetfulness of his duty to the Lord who bought him? The question is as yet one of earnest love, "What

doest thou here?" He would not lose one sheep. But if it should be unanswered, or answered from an evil conscience, take heed lest it be asked in wrathful indignation, "What doest thou here?" and He pluck you away from the world, and consign you to the prison-house and stripes of the unprofitable servant.

How much of deep meaning, how much subject for serious thought lies in that short and simple word, "here!" It signifies the post and station which the Lord, as king of his people, and head of his body, hath assigned to us in his Church. It implies our being always there on the watch, like good soldiers, under the Captain of our salvation, and fighting there a good fight. It bids us understand in it this life, the abode of the soul in this present state of the body, the time and place in which alone repentance can avail, and the work of salvation can be wrought out. Should not, then, all that is to be done, be done here, and done quickly too? for who knoweth the day and hour when any one of us may be no longer "here" but "there," even in the invisible world, where they who have been faithless to the Lord can have no other prospect than a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries?

And see in the end of Elijah the end of all the true servants of the Lord. When he had done what he was required to do "here," he

was taken up alive into heaven. And so at the last day, when the souls of the righteous shall be clothed with glorified bodies, shining as the sun, they shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall ever be with the Lord [2], in the life and glory of the world to come.

And now, may I not ask you, what can be more precious, what more excellent, what more earnestly to be sought, what more joyfully to be found, than a good answer out of a clear conscience to the Lord's question, "What doest thou here?"

[2] 1 Thess. iv. 17.

SERMON VII.

THE DEATH UNTO SIN.

MARK xvi. 3.

"And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"

So said the women who came to see Christ, who had died upon the cross. When they had come upon the spot, and not before, all at once they were struck with the thought of the great stone which closed the mouth of the sepulchre, and far surpassed their power to remove. Are they the last who have had the like fears on a like occasion? Has not every Christian who has set himself in earnest to the work of following Christ in his death, been alarmed at an equal difficulty? And are not many frightened at the very outset of their course, and desist almost as soon as they have begun, if indeed they have begun at all?

Surely no one, who understands any thing of the nature of his Christian profession, expects to maintain it without trial of his strength: he that seeks Christ crucified and dead for sin, sees that he has first of all to roll away the stone from the sepulchre. And when he has counted the cost, he often thinks it a labour far beyond all his means of overcoming, and utters in despair the cry, "Who shall roll me away the stone from the sepulchre? for I cannot."

This is, in fact, continually the cry of our weak nature, of the old man within us who is of little faith, and sees not that the finger of God is stronger than the arm of man. When an open proof and exercise of our profession is called for, what an alarm is there in all quarters of the corruption of the heart, what a number of difficulties start up at once, what a list of impossibilities comes before the mind! Our great adversary would little understand his business, if he did not help with all his arts of delusion, and add to the perplexities of our natural irresolution.

The moment in which a resolution is made, is too often followed by an act of irresolution, which, alas! is not of a moment. Cannot every one confess to the truth of this, from the course of his own experience? To seek Christ, as dead for our sins, is to resolve to forsake them, and to follow Him to his sepulchre with

the earnest desire and full determination of crucifying some sinful affection, and resisting some inclination or purpose of our corrupt nature. Perhaps a man begins in good earnest. He begins plainly to see that his course is going downward instead of upward, and therefore must be altered. He begins to perceive that time hath become precious, and that, instead of having all the day of life before him, he has perhaps but some few hours of the evening left. He begins to be ashamed of so much time spent to so little purpose, and so many opportunities met with so little or no improvement. He is even alarmed at the prospect of having to answer in no long time for so much light, so many talents, such length of days, months, and years, such a post of service, all made nothing of, all gone as they came, without having left any token of their having been imprest by a careful stewardship. He weeps to find that they have been to his heart as the marks in the sand before the tide comes in, as the figures in the clouds before the wind sprung up, as the rippling of the water when a stone has been thrown in, and then all is smooth again as before. Out of all the immense store which God entrusted to him, he has nothing left to present confidently before Him, as becomes the faithful administrator to heavenly property. Then there rise up in his mind many passages of Scripture, which de-

mand a profitable use of every gift of God in his service, and to his honour and glory. Then comes the comparison of this demand with his satisfaction of it. And then again arises a melancholy review of lost time and abused gifts, and all with the prospect of a short and uncertain time before him for redeeming all this immense loss. He becomes convinced of the danger of living any longer to himself and not unto the Lord, and of the necessity of being the Lord's in this world, that he may be the Lord's in the world to come. He perceives that all in this world passes away for ever, as to any advantage he would have of it; while the judgment upon it will not pass away, but abide for ever. He finds out that he has been all along misled by the flesh, deluded by the world, befooled by the devil, and is desirous of coming to a right mind, and learning true wisdom while yet the time will allow.

Now here is a man awakened to the error of his ways, and seeing no road of escape but that which leads to the sepulchre of Christ, that, namely, of following Christ in his death by dying unto his former sins. For what other way is there? Every other is as full of judgment, destruction, and death, as that on which he has been walking all his life long. Every other leads to the pit of corruption, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched. This alone is the way of salvation. This alone leads to ever-

lasting life and light. As well may a man have gone and sought for righteousness in the house of Pilate, and for innocence in the palace of Herod, and for holiness in the home of the High Priest, and for faith in the dwelling of Judas, as have chosen any other than this.

Let us then suppose him thus to have started, and now to have come upon the ground of Christ's sepulchre, to the spot where he must begin his death unto sin. Now begins the struggle. Every sin, every infirmity, pleads to be heard, before it be turned off from his service. He thought not so much of the sacrifice while he had it only in his imagination; but now it is before him in reality. Do not this, says the law of Christ, dead for sins, but be as a dead man in the grave unto it, who has neither eyes to see it, nor hands to handle it. Put it away from thee instantly, lest thou hanker after it, and take it unto thy bosom closer than ever. Thou art purposed to be dead with Christ, to be buried with Christ; and therefore thou hast nothing to do with the old things of the sinful body, and the rebellious flesh. Thou professest to have quenched the thirst of intemperance, the hunger of indulgence, and to thirst and hunger after righteousness; to have awakened from thy forgetfulness of God to the sense of his presence and the remembrance of his law, and to feel the necessity of putting off all inordinate affection, and of giving thyself up

in obedience to the will and commandments of the Lord, who bought thee with the price of his death.

But, on the other hand, Do this, says the law of sin in the members. Continue in thy former courses. Do you not see how uncalled for is the change, how unnecessary the sacrifice, how uncomfortable is the situation in which you will place yourself? Who demands from you such a surrender of your former habits? Do you not see the difficulties which stand in the way? Are you to live a life of continual struggle? Are you to deny yourself your old enjoyments? What will you have in their room? Is watching unto righteousness as pleasant as sleeping in sin? Is swimming against the flood of ungodliness as easy as swimming with it? Is a distant prize which you may miss, to be preferred to one at hand which is certain? Will you be able to maintain the strictness of the profession which you have taken up? and if not, is there not danger of your being worse off than before? So says the law of sin, and thus with all his desire to follow Christ unto his death and burial, he is at the same time tempted with a number of hindrances which seem effectually to block up his way, and if he feel the spirit to be willing, he also feels the flesh to be weak. He begins to despair of strength to remove them, and asks in his despondency, "Who shall roll me away the stone from the door of the

sepulchre? that I may see and find Christ crucified for me."

Now the women who uttered these words had scarcely let them pass from their lips, when they saw that the stone was rolled away, great though it was, and upon it was sitting an angel from heaven, with a countenance bright as lightning, and raiment white as snow. And he said unto them, "Fear ye not: for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified; He is not here, for He is risen, as He said."

My brethren, even so it befalls every one that through the sincere purpose of the death unto sin, seeks Christ crucified. Those hindrances which his weak unassisted nature never could so much as hope to remove, are rolled away by the arm of the power of God. And if he feel the power of the death of his Saviour, he feels also the glorious power of his resurrection: he is enabled by the grace of God to overcome all the hindrances and stones of offence, which before seemed so great and difficult of removal. He puts off the old man, and becomes the new man, endued with heavenly strength and angelic might, sufficient for the struggle that awaits him, and prepared to grapple with every obstacle. And on the very spot, and in the very moment of the crucifixion of the body of his sins, he is saluted with the joyful assurance, "Fear not: I know that thou seekest Christ crucified: He is not dead,

but He is risen." And thus, surrounded with the heavenly brightness of the promises of God, ministered to by his pure celestial grace, he looks forward beyond the grave of death, which cannot detain the people of Christ any more than it detained Him who vanquished it; he looks onward to the entrance into everlasting life and glory at the resurrection of the dead, when they that are dead in Christ shall rise first.

Now many are they who would rather forsake a course of carelessness and forgetfulness of God; they see its folly and unreasonableness; they perceive in what it must end. And many are they also that unwillingly abide in some known disobedience of God's law, in which they have so entangled themselves, that it should have come to seem necessary to their worldly comfort or well-being. But all these have not the resolution to free themselves from the yoke; and after a few qualms of conscience, they settle down again in all their former listlessness and disregard of God's commandments. They no sooner see the sepulchre of Christ, and the spot where they must become partakers in his death by dying to their besetting sin, than they give up the trial, crying out that the thing is impossible. This blocks up, and that blocks up. In short, they content themselves with saying, "Who shall roll me away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" and

then resign themselves without a further struggle to their fate.

But this would not be so, if they accompanied hearty prayer to the Lord with hearty endeavours at removing the hindrances from the way. Let them begin to practise with the lighter ones, with overcoming, for instance, the habit of frivolous excuses, which is so general an obstacle to a consistent course. When a man has once overcome one, ever so frivolous, he is prepared for overcoming one more serious. And when he has overcome it, he is quite astonished and ashamed that he should ever for a moment have yielded to it. He is thenceforward convinced that all the rest are not at all more serious and substantial, and goes to work with them, with the strong hand of a just indignation at having been so befooled and perilled by them; and thus under the grace of God his faith becomes strong enough to remove mountains. He has experienced that God will enable him, and nothing therefore shall deter him from his duty. And thus the man who began, for instance, with fighting against those common, and yet most frivolous excuses which are made for absence from this place on this day, will end with a strength which carries him conqueror over every temptation, helps him over every stone of offence, although, while they were yet at a distance, and before he came to grapple with them, they looked great and

stedfast as the mountains which cannot be moved.

This is the Christian course. We have continually to remove from before us the stones of hindrance which the world, the flesh, and the devil, put in the way of the seekers of Christ crucified. But all true seekers will find: they will be supplied with a help, against which all the powers of their adversaries shall never prevail; and they shall find Christ risen, Christ ascended, Christ glorified amid his saints in his kingdom which hath no end.

SERMON VIII.

NO PEACE IN SIN.

(*Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.*)

Isa. lvii. 21.

"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

HERE is a solemn proclamation brought from the throne of God by his prophet; and this world is full of examples, proving to us how strictly God has kept his word. Who sees, who has ever seen, the wicked man in real peace? Peace requires a quiet mind. But what wicked man's mind is quiet? Its evil desires are always hurrying him after something or other, keeping him discontented with what he has, and hankering after that which he has not. When he has come to the end of one sin, it is but to start afresh upon another; and when he has tasted one enjoyment, he immediately longs for another. His eye is never quiet, but roving from one object of desire to another, or from one object of guilty fear to

another. His hand is never at peace, but going from one evil deed to another. His heart is never at peace, but rambling from one evil thought to another, from one bad passion to another, and is also driven to and fro by one sting of guilty and fearful conscience after another. Even where he seeks peace, he is furthest from it. What peace is there in the shout and fever of drunkenness? what peace is there in the giving the rein of indulgence to brutal appetite? what peace is there even in the innocent enjoyments of life, which he partakes with other men? His heart is not at ease for them. No, in spite of all his endeavours after peace, there sounds in it continually the echo of that tremendous denunciation of God, "There is no peace for the wicked."

How can there possibly be? To have peace the mind must be quiet; and for the mind to be quiet, it must be stayed upon something that is fixed and immoveable. But is there any thing in this world fixed? Does not every thing fleet away, and pass by us in continual change? The very heavens above us are in continual motion; and night and day bring joy and sorrow, life and death. The pride of the morning is followed by the lamentation of the evening. Friends, comforts, health, and strength vanish away one after another. And yet in such a world, for he looks to no other, the wicked man seeks for peace. He tries one

support after another. But all fail. All the supports of this world are found quite vain. The support of sinful pleasure is found to pierce through the hand that leans upon it. The support of kindred and friends is found to break under his weight, like a rotten staff, for death and innumerable accidents are continually taking them away. The support of riches and honour is found to be a staff that sinks into deep mire. There is indeed no rest for the sole of his foot by day, nor for the laying down of his head at night. He is tossed to and fro, like the waves of the sea, the very sport of every wind of evil passion that blows, of every worldly accident that befalls: and his continual motion serves but to reveal shameful deeds, abominable words. He is one of the raging waves of the sea, which, says St. Jude, foam out their own shame. He is, says Isaiah, like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

But the good is like a well, which no wind ever ruffles, clear and undefiled, not black with storms, but showing the bright and calm image of the heaven upon its waters, not casting up mire and dirt to the annoyance and disgust of all beholders, but supplying clean and wholesome water to the neighbourhood; for he is not as a well in miry ground, which becomes muddy by the very tread of the person who is coming to it; he is as a well in a rock. And

he is on a rock indeed, and that rock is Christ. That can never be moved. And therefore the mind which is fixed upon that is stedfast and unmoveable. Thus it has peace, that peace which the world can neither give nor take away, that peace which the Son of God, who declared that there was no peace for the wicked, promised to all his faithful people, saying, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you[1]." That peace which comes from trusting to the things of the world to come, which shall not be shaken. The man of God has his heart lifted up to the throne where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and what can interrupt the peace which is there? The man of God walks with God, dwells in his presence, lies down under the shadow of his wings. What end can there be to such peace? He is in the very regions of peace. The man of God is looking forward to an eternity of peace, and therefore he is not disturbed by the tumult and turmoil of this world, which is but for a moment. He has full, unfailing faith in the promises of God in Jesus Christ; he is assured of them by a continual and bountiful earnest; he has peace with God, being reconciled by the death of his only Son; he is indeed a son of peace, all whose ways are peace, and his peace none can take from him. It is the peace

[1] John xiv. 27.

of God which passeth all understanding, it is the quietness which God giveth, and no man can make trouble, that which he hath proclaimed through this very Prophet, saying, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace[2];" and through the angels at the birth of the Prince of peace, saying, "On earth peace, good will towards men." It is the peace which through the same Prophet has been declared to us, saying, "My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee[3]." It is the peace to which the Apostle St. Paul invites us, crying, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body[4]."

It is indeed our calling as Christians, it is that state into which we are invited out of the continued and harassing agitation of a wicked world. Is it not strange that so many should refuse such an invitation, that they should prefer to remain in the miserable warfare of rebels against God, which must end in his thrusting them down into the everlasting pit? How strange that men should refuse the peace which God offers, and seek it from them who cannot give it, from the world, which passeth away as

[2] Isa. lii. 7. [3] Isa. liv. 10. [4] Col. iii. 15.

a shadow; from the flesh, which is as the flower which in the morning is green, and in the evening is cut down and withered; and from the devil, whose continued device in his heart, and word in his mouth is, War! War! War against God in heaven, war against his saints on earth, war to the very last, even to the very moment of being fast bound for ever in the chains of the bottomless pit.

Is not God's proclamation in this text clear enough, loud enough? He proclaims eternal war against the wicked; He says as much as, "I am the only giver of peace; and thou shalt have no peace either in this world or in the world to come. In this world thou shalt have its misery and sorrow from the froth of the cup to the dregs. Thou shalt have the fretfulness of continual disappointment; thou shalt have the pangs of the fears of a guilty conscience. In thy body, in thy soul, and in thy spirit thou shalt have no rest: for I am against thee. And this world from which thou seekest peace, shall be found in the end but a storehouse of sorrow, an earnest of that misery to which, if thou repent not, thou shalt be consigned for ever. I am peace, and he that is not with me is against me, and in continual strife and war, misery and vexation."

But there is another proclamation, in the word which God sent[5], preaching peace by

[5] Acts x. 36.

Jesus Christ, assuring us that, through his name, whosoever believeth in Him[6] shall receive remission of sins. By which faith being justified, we have peace with God. Thus while He proclaims war against the rebel, He promises peace to the penitent. Will not a man open his ears to the sound of these proclamations? According as he hears them, so will he hear the trumpet of the last day, which shall proclaim the coming of the Prince of peace, with everlasting peace to the good, and everlasting war to the wicked. He will hear them therefore surely in obedience to the word of God which sends them forth. O let none to whom such sounds have come, and to all of us they have come, be indifferent to them; but let them tremble at the tremendous sentence which God pronounces against sin, and let them receive with joy the glad tidings of salvation!

Why will a man continue to seek peace where God has thus openly told him there is no peace, and there never shall be peace? Why will he believe his own corrupt and deceitful heart, rather than the word of the Lord? Is there any peace, can there possibly be any peace, in a state of rebellion? Let then a man forsake the sin of his heart, cast out all its wicked devices, and turn unto the Lord his God, and then he shall have peace; and let him seek and find peace before the God of

[6] Acts x. 43.

mercy becomes a God of vengeance. He will not be mocked by feigned submission, He cannot be deceived by outward profession. Therefore a man must be resolute against his enemy, and God's enemy, to reject his service altogether, and watchful in resistance ever after. So he will become a son of peace, an heir of the peace of the world to come everlasting.

O how awfully have the words of the text been verified in the lives of the wicked! A wicked unbeliever has left on record the reflections which suddenly flashed across his heart in passing through a churchyard where a gravestone told that the dead looked for peace. O happy the dead, he cried: would that I could gain that prospect! And did he ever? Did he pursue this reflection, to which God in his mercy had wakened his heart? Alas! no, he would not know in his day the things which belonged unto his peace, and so they were hidden from his eyes. He forgot the precious warning. He went on to seek peace in the thoughts and deeds of sin, and died, in utter impenitence and unbelief, of a broken heart. So did God make good his word with him, and so will He with every one that thinketh and doeth wickedness. Has any one ever seen a notorious sinner whom he could pronounce happy, even in matters of this world? and has he not seen many such the most unhappy of men? For their sins scourge their

own backs, and sting their own hearts. However they may hide them from their eyes, their sins find them out, and hunt them down, and deliver them fast bound to the tormentor.

Hear, then, every one, what his God saith, and let him make Him his God indeed by keeping his sayings. Let him hold fast the profession which he has made of the faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God, delivered for our own offences, raised again for our justification. In Him let him seek peace, in Him let him ensue it, by walking in newness of life, as dead unto sin, buried with Christ, and alive unto God. Then he will be on the way of peace: then the sea of the tossing waves of sin shall be quite calm for him, and shall cease to cast up before his eyes the foul dirt and mire of guilt and sin, and to convict him in his own eyes. His sins shall have lost their hold on him, and shall have been forgiven by God. And instead of the threat of God which saith there is no peace to the wicked, there shall be the promise of God which saith there shall be peace to the righteous for ever and ever.

SERMON IX.

THE CORD OF SIN.

(*Second Sunday in Advent.*)

ISA. v. 18, 19.

"Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make it good, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!"

WE are still kept by the service of our Church in remembrance of the promise of the Lord's second coming, and are admonished of making due preparation for it. This chapter of the prophet Isaiah bears very closely on so solemn a subject, and is admirably suited to the occasion. There the Lord is represented as complaining of the ill return which his chosen people had made for all the benefits He had bestowed upon them. He compares them to a vineyard on which its owner had spent immense care and labour, and then, when he expected to receive the wages of the work of his hands, in plenty of ripe wholesome fruit of

grapes, it brought him forth worse than nothing at all—a crop of wild and poisonous berries, for such are what are called here wild grapes. He then proceeds to rebuke them for their many and manifold sins, which he tells them of openly one by one, and ends in threatening them with the coming of the Lord in judgment upon this thankless and disobedient people.

Among these upbraidings and threatenings come the words of the text, applicable to the whole body of offenders against God. They are at all times, and among every people, of especial interest, were it only on two accounts: (1) the easy thoughtlessness with which men begin their acquaintance with sin, and (2) the hardness of heart in which they are confirmed by its habits. These are represented under a very lively figure in the former of these two verses; and the desperate rebelliousness of spirit to which they are brought, so as to utter defiance against the judgment of the Almighty, is expressed to the life in the latter.

As looking forward to the second coming of the Lord in power and great glory, as professing to be carrying forward a state of suitable preparation for that coming, we are not a little concerned with the bearings of such a text. Let us then take it up for our serious consideration.

The figure under which the sinner is represented in the former of these verses is that of

a rope-maker. He begins with a slight slender thread of flax or hemp, which he can break almost with as much ease as a spider's web; but he goes on and draws it out continually; and then you see that the end of his work is a cart-rope, thick and strong enough to bind the strongest man or beast upon earth.

So a man begins and ends with sin. He begins with drawing iniquity with cords of vanity. The iniquity upon which he is tempted to enter seems to him a mere trifle at first, almost a thing of indifference, to which, if not good, he thinks that he gives a hard name to call it downright bad; and if it even do smite his conscience with some evil signs of its real nature, which he can hardly mistake, he is vain enough, in the notion of his own strength, to think, that when he has gone into it he can as easily come out of it again. It is but as flax or tow (he says); it is but a cord of vanity and not of substance. He needs not to go on spinning and drawing it out (he thinks); but he will stop short as soon as he has gone as far as he wants, and that is not far. I will only go just so far in the transgression; just that little way, so trifling; I will only give a few moments to it, as to a trifle, and then I will leave it, and not have to do with it again. Alas! how many can fix the beginning of their ruin in this world, and imminent peril of the judgment of the next, on the day when they

said, in foolish security, and in face of a warning conscience, "It is but for this once!" Alas! they never said so again. It proved to them to be "now and for ever." How many are rueing the moment when they allowed themselves, whether through carelessness or overpersuasion, to go to a place which they knew that they ought to shun, into company which they had every reason to suspect, or did a thing which had a shade, however slight, of unfairness and injury in it, or neglected a known duty towards God or man, upon an excuse so slight that they dared not examine it! It will not do to say to conscience, as Felix did to St. Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." 'Now or never' is the time of conscience; and do it or leave it alone, according as the Lord hath commanded or forbidden, and not according to the law of your own will, is the counsel of conscience. But the vain man, trusting to his own strength, and therefore distrusting the grace of God's Holy Spirit, goes on to flatter himself. Some carnal desire, some worldly affection of his heart, some unwatched temptation, draws him on thus to tamper with something that, notwithstanding all argument, does not sit quite comfortable upon his mind. But then he soothes the alarm of conscience by saying that the fault is a mere trifle; it is a slight transgression, easy of escape, too small for judgment,

and it shall never, never be done but this once. But he does come to it again; yea, and again, and again, like the poor fish, who returns again and again to snuff at the bait, until at last he is caught. All now begins to be against him. He has found the sin pleasant; and he thinks that he can take his pleasure just so far and no further, and then have done with it. He will employ it a little while forsooth as his servant, but not long enough for it to grow his master. He will only spin out a few slight threads, and then he will break it up again, and have done with it;—as if the effect of the most trifling sin could be done away by any power under that of Almighty God's; and as if he, who had forsaken God to do this sin, however small, yet with his eyes open, could of his own unassisted strength break the slightest, thinnest cord ever spun by sin. No! its bands, though they seem smooth and soft as silk, brittle as flax or tow, thin and fine as the spider's web, are strong enough to hold the strongest of the sons of Adam, are proof against all his struggles, and entangle him only the more for his violence, and keep him there until the enemy come out to secure him with his cart-rope, and bind him fast, and carry him to his den. Thus, were our Lord as unwatchful as his people, they could never escape after they had once entered into the slightest entanglement of sin. But He is merciful and gracious, and,

through his Holy Spirit, gives warning of danger, alarms the conscience, and gives them a way of escape. But then this gracious help becomes less as it is less made use of; and if men will go with open eyes into a sin with the presumption that it will bring them out of it again, they are in the very fact foregoing all claim to that help; assuredly they are casting themselves upon uncovenanted mercy. However trifling a sin may appear, it only *seems* trifling, and that because our short-sightedness cannot see its working: but working it is somewhere or other, and working effectually too; and therefore if it be wilfully entered upon, and still more, wilfully persisted in, it must divide and estrange the heart from God, and God from the heart. Satan would understand little indeed of his craft, if he began his temptation to a sin with setting it in all its real shape before a man. He knows us far better, and begins with disguises, or at least with what seem excusable failings and almost allowable relaxations of our rule of strictly dutiful obedience. He knows that sin grows as naturally and as fast as the fire, which lays a city in ruins, comes out of a single spark in some solitary obscure corner; as surely as the rains, which bury a whole country in a flood, begin with a few sprinkled drops, which were not worth talking about; as surely as the river, which must be crossed with ships, begins

with a well which you might empty almost with the scoop of your hand; as certainly (to return to the figure in the text), as the strong thick cart-rope begins with a few weak flaxen or hempen threads.

Should not ours, then, be a state of watchfulness? Can we yield to temptation, and say, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no further?" We may just as well stand on the shore, and say the same words to the tide as it is coming in. In both cases our only safety is in flight. And whither shall we flee, but to the presence of our Lord, where no evil can enter? We must pray ourselves into communion with Him, thus availing ourselves of the access in Jesus Christ our Intercessor, and then the good thoughts, the heavenly desires, the covenanted grace of fervent prayer will put to flight far away the evil thoughts, the sinful inclinations, the artful deluding persuasions which are the instruments of temptation. Thus we are clothed in the armour of light against the assaults of the powers of darkness; thus we are awaiting, in a state of due preparation, the coming of the day of the Lord.

(2.) But all will be blinded to this awful prospect, and will be caught unprepared, who continue to draw out and spin at length their sins as a rope. We have seen how naturally they grow from a very small beginning; how often they bind a man for life, who, when he

began, thought to break them at his pleasure, as he would the slender threads of tow; but the habits of sin, which have grown stronger day after day, by being indulged instead of resisted, form a coil of rope, which at once entangles and binds him fast, so that he has lost all mastery over himself, and must needs do as he is bidden, follow whither he is led, by his tyrannical master and enslaver. And what comes next? The text informs us in the next verse. It tells us that these men, who, beginning with drawing iniquity with cords of vanity, had ended with drawing sin, as it were, with a cart-rope, went on to mock at judgment to come. Alas! this is the only thing then left for them. The thoughts of judgment to come are of course very unpleasant to him who knows that he shall have to suffer from it when it does come. His sin therefore hardens him into a disbelief of it. And here lies the secret spring of so much infidelity as there is in this world. Hardened obstinate sinners, who are drawing out the cart-rope of sin, cannot believe in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ; because our God is a God of vengeance, a consuming fire upon sin, and because Jesus Christ, the Redeemer from sin, whom they are crucifying afresh with their sins, will come as Judge upon their iniquities. Thus they run into all the impious defiance possible of God's judgments. They challenge Him to execute them. They say,

"We are curious to see thy day. Make good the promise of thy coming; and hasten its fulfilment. We are anxious to add so much to our knowledge. We would fain see so grand a sight; we should like to behold so great a mystery unravelled, and to be witnesses of so astonishing a work." Or, in the language of the Prophet, "Let him make it good, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it."

O what a dreadful state is this to come to! What a sure, certain, and most due preparation is here for eternal condemnation, when the day of judgment shall come from the Lord! Are not the thoughts of it most appalling to every heart that retains any wholesome fear of judgment to come? And yet this is the end of men (the text tells us) who began with making light of light transgressions; who, in the vanity and self-reliance of an unwatchful heart, commenced with drawing iniquity with the slight and weak cords of vanity, that is, of sins of carelessness and wanton indifference, rather than of open presumption and determined wilfulness. How many, alas! have come to this miserable end already; how many more are on their way; how many more have yet to begin the fatal course, before the day of the Lord shall come!

None is safe who is not looking to that day. Will the steward do his duty, who never looks

forward to the day of reckoning with his employer? And we are stewards to an amount far beyond all earthly store, if we be stewards of the manifold grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Or will the runner run straight, who looks not to the end before him? Let us be prepared for that day therefore. And moreover, let us be more watchful than curious; because many are at present busily guessing and conjecturing about the time of the coming of that day, who had far better employ their time and thoughts in being prepared for it when it shall come. The text tells us, by putting it into the mouth of wicked men, that it is not good for us to say in our hearts, in any sense, "Let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it;" unless indeed we can say it in the spirit of his beloved disciple, who was so well prepared for that coming, that when the Lord said, "Surely, I come quickly," he could answer, "Amen!" and say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus[1]." Or of that prayer which says, "Thy kingdom come." "It is not for us to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put into his own power[2];" but it is for us to prepare ourselves against them, by working out our salvation with that fear and trembling which becomes servants who have to render an account, and know not the day or hour at

[1] Rev. xxii. 20. [2] Acts i. 7.

which they may be called on to give it in. One thing we all know, that we have not a day, no, not an hour, too much for the work. And we know also that the work of our whole life is but as one day's work, and that therefore there is no rest for us until the night is come; and that shall usher in the morning of the resurrection of the dead; and that day shall be the everlasting Sabbath, on which there shall be a rest from all work, and all the faithful servants of the Lord shall enjoy the wages of their labour in the Lord, seated down at the feast of eternal life.

Let the seriousness of this prospect make all serious in those daily matters which are too apt to be overlooked, but which it is our business to turn to the account of our preparation for eternal life, and to the glory of God. Little matters make a great sum in the course of a man's life. So if, on the contrary, we allow these little matters, which after all are ordained of God for our daily trial and continual exercise, to be petty transgressions of God's law, unwatchful forgetfulness of his presence, careless concessions to our unchecked inclinations, then what shall we be doing, but making them cords of vanity to draw iniquity? And we have seen what this too commonly ends in. May, therefore, the grace of God preserve us all from the beginning!

SERMON X.

THE LAWFUL STRIFE.

2 Tim. ii. 5.

"And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."

Man likes to choose his own way; but the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has marked out a way for him: hence one reason at least of his unwillingness to go along it. For had it been more suitable to the desires of his heart than it is, it is not quite clear that he would have kept it much more straightly, since that perverse and rebellious preference of his own way would have led him from it. How much more, then, when the way is so narrow, so rugged! Men are therefore very apt to make for themselves a gospel of their own, in which they leave out all that is difficult in the true Gospel, and retain only that which is easy and agreeable. For instance, they leave out the labour and retain the wages; they leave out the

judgment, and retain the salvation; they leave out the suffering, and retain the glory.

The text tells us that we must put off this perverseness of the old man, and put on all the obedience of the new man, following the direction which the Lord hath given. No man, it says, who is a candidate for the prize at the public games of the Greeks, among whom Timothy now was, can win the prize, unless he conform to the rules of the contest, which determine what is fair and what is unfair. He who strives in the race must not make a short cut, but keep the course, however winding it may be. He who engages in the wrestling-match must not use any unfair play, but do all according to the rules of the game. So that though the one should come in first to the goal, and the other should throw his opponent, yet neither would receive the crown of victory unless he had done all fairly according to rule: and so also as to the other games.

In several other places besides this, St. Paul has likened the Christian to the champion in those games, reminding him, by the comparison, of the toil and struggle which he must undergo, before he can attain to the crown of life and glory. He cannot have the latter without the former. And here moreover he tells us, that the struggle must not be according to our own will and notions, but according to the precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is

the awarder of the prize. What then is too commonly man's will, and what the Lord's precept?

Man's will is to have no change of his ways, no sorrow for the past, no amendment (but he will not call it amendment) for the future. All this is too humbling to his pride, too much of a curb upon his self-will. But our Lord's precept is repentance: you must come to me, and receive that which I give along the road of repentance. "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" are his words. And "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way," He says, "which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it." What now shall be done? These conditions are not very agreeable to the wilful heart of man. A short cut is taken, by which the long and rugged part of the course which runs through the department of repentance may be avoided. One man finds himself quite good enough, and sees no need of repentance at all. Another thinks that he must go through it at some time or other, but that he may take it towards the end of the course, not considering that he may never advance so far, and, even if he should, would have the most rugged path to run when he was most tired. Another thinks that he has gone through it, because he has undergone sorrow and humiliation at some worldly disappointment. Another substitutes for it a short and violent, and yet most methodical, fit of loud self-accusation, which is soon forgotten.

Another is truly sorrowful for a time, but thinking, as many do, that repentance and sorrow for having done amiss are the same thing, his repentance does not endure. Another thinks that he has done with it because he feels a sense of joy which he never before experienced; but he does not very nicely examine its foundation, thus actually going by the rule of contraries. In fact, all the devices of man's heart are put forth, all shifts are resorted to, all by-ways taken, all short cuts made, in order to avoid the rugged road of repentance. Our Lord has called it a road and a gate. Some eagerly snatch at the figure of the gate, for a gate is soon gone through; but they are by no means so ready to accept the figure of the road, especially since our Lord's words make it the one and only road from beginning to end;—for it leadeth unto life. And if it was said that a road led to this place, and nothing more, we should surely presume that we had to go along it all the way.

The strife, then, in overcoming the ruggedness that besets the course of repentance is the lawful strife which gains the crown for the candidate for everlasting life, and no other. Repentance is the road of Christian life, along which he goes in faith. It is not simply sorrow, regret, sense of shame. So far from it, that it may and does supply its very opposites—joy, gladness, and the hope of glory. It means

a frame or spirit of mind permanently altered from that of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts of the world and the flesh, to that of the new man, which is renewed after God and the pure and glorious image of his only-begotten Son in righteousness and true holiness. It is not, indeed, regeneration, but it is the walk of him who walketh according to regeneration. And it is even so, that, as it is quite opposed to the course of this world, it must be full of trouble and trial, from within and from without. From within, from the struggle against the unruly appetites of our nature: from without, from the many and manifold hindrances opposed by the unbelieving part of mankind, and by allurements of the world. But at the same time, inasmuch as it is conformed to the world to come, it is full of the joy, peace, and comfort of which that world is full, and which it alone can give. Repentance must, indeed, begin in sorrow: for how shall a man turn unto God, without pangs of sorrow and shame for having offended Him? And therefore St. Paul says, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of[3]." And sorrow there will always be, not only on every remembrance of the past, but also on all the shortcomings of the glory of God, to which the

[3] 2 Cor. vii. 10.

Christian is still liable: but it is the sorrow that abaseth, in order to introduce and render more exquisite the joy that exalteth.

The making repentance a step, and not a course, merely a gate of introduction, and not a road also of daily conduct, is one of the short cuts by which men think to arrive at the prize, without going through all the prescribed rules of the struggle. They strive for masteries, but strive not lawfully. They have not the patience of faith for that, but are in a hurry to accomplish their end at once by unfair means. They act as unlawfully, that is (as we say, where games are concerned), as unfairly, as the runner who cuts short a part of the course in the race; as the wrestler, who should try to throw his adversary by entangling him with something else but his arms and legs; as the boxer, who should endeavour to shorten the fight by charging his fist with some weight within it. All such not only lose the prize, but obtain disgrace.

We must strive lawfully: we must submit to God's way, and forego our own. This is the very first lesson that we have to learn. Without it, we cannot begin the real strife for masteries.

And not only must we bring our minds to submit to the rules which our Lord hath laid down, but also our hearts to understand them: indeed, we must first understand them before

we can truly accept them. We cannot in any case effectually bind ourselves to a duty of which we know not the extent; we cannot be sure of accomplishing a thing of which we have not counted the cost. Now our blessed Lord hath set before us our course, both by example and precept. And what remains, is to make up our minds to rise and follow. He is the way: in Him we see our road. In his trials, we have the model of our lawful strife. In his ascension into glory, we see the assurance of our crown. His flesh was crucified: so must we crucify the flesh. He died: so we must mortify our members which are upon earth. He rose again: even so we must rise again unto newness of life. He is seated in heaven: so we must set our affections on things above. The rules are plain; they cannot be confounded with the rules of strife for any worldly mastery. And this is the very reason why they are not commonly understood. Men know that they are too plain to be misunderstood, and therefore are unwilling to understand them. They are reluctant to see how widely they differ from the rules which they wish to follow: they are written in letters of burning light amidst thick darkness; but men are not so ready even as the careless Belshazzar, to call for God's Spirit to interpret them. Men are afraid to look at them and read them, because they are afraid of conviction. Even in matters of worldly charge,

do we not find men often reluctant to know the full extent of their duty, because they do not like, whether from indolence, whether from fear, or whatever cause, to act up to their responsibility? Do they not wilfully blind themselves, both as to the things which they ought to do, and the things which they ought not to do? Much more then are they likely to do this, in a case so much more removed from the prevailing practice of the world, as is that of the practice of the Gospel.

We see then what we have to contend against. It is a compliance with the course of a sinful world; a reluctance to change our course into one which is not in conformity with it, but even in a contrary direction. It is putting God's end, indeed, before us, even the prospect of eternal life, but not using his means, but putting our own in their place, because we find them much more agreeable: it is, in short, the indulgence of our nature. Against this we must strive for the mastery: with this we must wrestle, and endeavour to overthrow it: with this we must fight, and endeavour to bring it under, and subdue it.

Let us remember that the great difficulty of every new course lies at the beginning; and in proportion as we advance from the beginning, the more easy we find it become. But most especially is this the case in the Gospel of Christ, because the help of divine grace

becomes more abundant in proportion to the use we make of it; and no prayer for such help was ever yet refused. It may seem to be refused; but then it is not God who refuses, but man who does not truly pray: for that cannot be true prayer which is not accompanied with hearty endeavour. We cannot truly pray for that which we do not heartily wish, and we do not heartily wish for that for which we do not endeavour. Endeavour, therefore, is a necessary accompaniment to prayer; it is the outward expression of the faith which is necessary to prayer; it is prayer with the hands, as the words are prayer with the lips: and therefore both must go together to make the prayer of the heart. This is a necessary part of our lawful strife.

And surely it is a large and daily part of our lawful strife to be on the watch against temptation. How little is this rule observed. But can a man be in earnest in forsaking any one sin, in striving after any spiritual acquirement without it? If in earnest indeed, then he is surely on the look-out at the entrance by which the temptation comes, that he may close the door in its face, seeing it afar off, in time so to do. And he is also on the look-out for those opportunities, which the Lord sends for the exercise of his gifts, to open the door to them ere they have passed by. Without such watching we are asleep. We are not warring

the warfare, under Christ the Captain of salvation, against the world, the devil, and the flesh. At best we are sentinels asleep at our post, and may be brought to judgment for the negligence. When all has thus been submitted unto the Lord, when we have made his rules our rules, when we have obtained the patience of faith to abide by them, and never to quit them for others which may seem to take us by a nearer way, and may be more easy of practice, then we are striving lawfully for the mastery, and then we shall obtain the crown. And in proportion to the lawfulness of the strife is the earnest of that crown, and its prospect is more real, more spiritual, more heavenly, more bright: it appears in all its splendour and beauty of an incorruptible crown. And the Christian more and more loves the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ on the last day, makes that day more and more his consolation, his rejoicing, because then He will appear in glory, and put the crown on the heads of his faithful people who have striven lawfully, and they shall dwell with Him, and be a royal priesthood under Him, for evermore.

SERMON XI.

THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH US.

(*Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.*)

MICAH vi. 3.

"O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

IN his merciful condescension, our Lord here enters into a controversy with his people, and calls upon the whole earth to witness it. He offers Himself to be judged as to his dealings. He bids them bring witnesses to testify, if there be aught against Him. He asks what harm He has done them, who has shewn them so many and especial mercies, in bringing them out of the bondage of Egypt into the land where they now were. And He calls upon them to explain what He has done to weary them and try their patience, while He has been so abundant in long-suffering and loving-kindness with them.

And may not the Lord have a like controversy with his people at this day, and expostulate with them after the same manner? Is all so smooth that there is no quarrel between the parties, and no rebellion on one side to provoke judgment on the other? Are there no signs of discontent on their side, none of displeasure on his? Surely this cannot be said. The Lord hath a controversy with too many of his people; let us look and see what it is.

(1.) Is there no where a cry to provoke the Lord to ask, "What have I done unto you?" What should the heart reply? It concerns us to consider.

When we fall short in putting to account the whole store of God's mercies, we are sure to charge the deficiency upon God's niggardliness, and not upon our own unfaithfulness: for self-justification is always the immediate consequence of self-inflicted loss. Hence arise the many murmurs against the dispensations of the kind providence of God; hence the many complaints of what men would have done if they had had the means, and of what they would not have done if they had had the light. The judgment which their sins have brought upon them causes them to complain, as if God had led them into their sins, and they had not fallen into them from their own unwatchfulness and neglect of his means of righteousness. Instead of lamenting his abuse of so much

light, his neglect of so abundant means, his waste of such golden opportunities, the offender complains of the difficulties of his situation, of the trying circumstances by which he was surrounded, of the strong temptation into which he was led. What more common than this? Why, it is the very extent of God's mercies which makes men murmurers and complainers; for by so much the more they have failed to take due advantage of them. Their plenty has made them idle, their certainty has made them careless; they have become so familiar with them as scarcely to be aware of them, and while, therefore, they are in their hands, are crying out for more, and tempting God with their thanklessness. Yet only spare a few moments, and see something of this extent.

They have been placed in the Church of God. What could the Lord have done more for them? for here is the great storehouse of his mercies. Here are concentred all, both of heaven and earth, and all their fulness. Eye cannot number them, heart cannot comprehend them. As far as God hath provided them, they are complete, though, alas! not so far as man will accept and use them. He has been brought out of darkness and bondage. His bruises have been healed, his fetters have been broken from his feet, he hath been clad in a royal robe, a crown hath been put upon his head, he hath been made to sit in the bright light of heavenly

places, and at a table of a spiritual feast of heavenly blessings and enjoyments. From a vessel of wrath he hath been made a vessel of honour; from a child of darkness exalted to a child of light; from one that was dead in sin unto one that is alive unto righteousness; from a worker of iniquity to a worker of holiness; from an expectant of death to an heir of light. But time would indeed fail in recounting the merciful provision for man's eternal life which hath been laid up in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who gave himself for us, and to which every one has power of access to whom God hath imparted the very first of his mercies, a place in that Church which He hath purchased with his own blood. After this, what would one reasonably expect among such as were thus so highly favoured of God? Would it not be a striving after the attainment of what has been offered, a diligent application of the means of attainment, a continual watchfulness against coming short of so much power of good, an unceasing desire of making the most of every thing, both because the more was made the more was still bestowed; and because not to make the most would argue a want of the sense of the value of the gift, and would be folly and unthankfulness both in one? Songs of thanksgiving, hymns of praise, hearty acknowledgment of far more than satisfaction and contentment; exclamations of love, cries of joy, shouts of exultation, adoration, and bless-

ing; vows of obedience, strains of devotion, prayers of earnest striving, the joyful expression of help received, the lively accents of hope assured; all these ought to ring in echo from one end of God's Church to the other. And while these are in our ears, there should be before our eyes, faces of gladness, hands held up in thankfulness, deeds of love, works of righteousness, ministrations of devoted service, the abundant harvest of the fruits of the Spirit. All this we should reasonably expect. All this God hath done for his people, if they would but have it done for them.

Now see the real state of things. But I cannot draw it. Discontent, disobedience, unthankfulness, unwatchfulness, murmurings, rebellion, open violation of God's statutes, public profanation of his ordinances, common and declared neglect and contempt of his sacraments and means of grace, are the prevailing features of the picture. And the general feeling puts one in mind, not of that of the children of God, but of a sulky, ill-conditioned boy, to whom kindness only gives the occasion of peevish complaint, and provokes his friends to ask of him with just indignation, "What have I done unto thee?" O what a question to be put by a merciful God and redeeming Saviour to any one of us! How full of condemnation are its seemingly gentle words; their gentleness being the severest rebuke of our unthankfulness.

Shall any one allow them to be said to him twice? What have I done unto thee, that thou art so froward, so careless of me and mine, so eager to justify thyself, so ready to blame and murmur against my ways? Did I not make thee? Have I not provided for thy eternal salvation, not sparing my only-begotten Son? Have I not filled thee with good things, so that thou hast not one reasonable want unsatisfied, and ten thousand satisfied which thou wouldest never have felt, but from the very abundance of my mercy? And yet thou actest as if I had done thee a grievous injury; as if I had wronged thee by making thee my debtor for so many and great benefits. Alas! my brethren, such language is but too well deserved by him who lives in carelessness of the means of salvation which have been put into his hands, and in forgetfulness of the will of his God and Saviour. To one who is not past feeling, what address could be more heart-cutting, coming as it does from Him whom we ought to love with all our heart, and soul, and mind? and even then we cannot enough.

Let us ask, do we incur the rebuke? are we thankful for the store of mercies in Jesus Christ, and do we show forth our thankfulness by our use of them? Remember that the question is one of angry, because rejected, love. The next question may be one of wrathful, because justly provoked, indignation. The question is one of God's controversy with

his people. The next may be one of his judgment upon him whom he reckons no longer among his people. The Lord in his long-suffering begins with affectionate expostulation; but in his justice He ends with fearful condemnation. O let none allow the acceptable time to pass by. Let him answer the question which the Lord condescends to put in sorrow rather than in anger, with the sorrow of an earnest repentance. And God grant that it may be said of him, as St. Paul said of the penitent Corinthians, "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge[1]!"

(2.) But the Lord's question goes further yet. It proceeds to ask, "Wherein have I wearied thee?" Alas! how cutting a question to the people that profess his name, who has asserted that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. What must be their condition who find such a yoke tight and galling, such a burden heavy to be borne? And do not multitudes of the people of this visible Church of God declare, that they do so find it, in all that they say or do? Do they take a lively pleasure in their religious duties? or do they perform them as a task, and

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 11.

lay hold of all manner of unworthy excuses for not performing them? Are, for example, his Sabbaths kept with cheerful and thankful obedience, for the great mercy shown in them and through them? Do men hasten to the house of God, with their hearts full of the remembrance of the Lord of glory, who rose from the dead, and exhibited the first-fruits of our resurrection on that day? And does this remembrance abide by them so continually, so lively, that they anxiously provide against every hindrance that can possibly happen? Or, on the contrary, do they gladly lay hold of every possible excuse, and when even that fails, even in their dull conscience, are ready to invent one? Do they on other days rise actively to the business of the day, without asking questions of what may hinder? but on the Lord's-day alone the sky is carefully observed, and a hindrance is soon found against going to be about the heavenly Father's business. This is but one example of the many cases in which men subject themselves to that severe reproof from the God of mercy, "Wherein have I wearied you?" Has it been in setting before you the work of your own salvation? Has it been in asking a meet return to my love; a due use of my gifts; a right application of my means; in laying on you such an exalted charge as that of rendering unto me due honour and glory; in stationing you in my Church on earth, where you may prepare

yourself for the general assembly in heaven; in preparing you with service here, that you may be fit to serve me with everlasting service hereafter? In all this have I wearied you? How then shall you be fit to bear the exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the world to come?

Such are but few indeed out of the very many points in which I might exemplify God's controversy with the careless and indifferent amongst his people. Even they that are faithful and striving amongst his people are so jealous of themselves, that they set the Lord before their eyes, as entering upon this controversy with them, and calling upon them to testify against Him if they can. And they rise from the self-examination with acknowledgments of their unworthiness, and confessions of, "Lord, thou alone art worthy. Thou hast done all things well. Glory and worship and honour be unto thee." What then shall the negligent, the unwatchful, the disobedient reply? Alas! too often their hearts, if not their lips, do testify against Him, murmur against the strictness of his statutes, groan with weariness of his ordinances. But, testify against me if you can, is the challenge of the Giver of all good things, of the Redeemer from the pit, of the Exalter unto heaven. Name a single good thing which I have withheld, a single mercy which I have not done, a single instrument of happiness to eternal life which I

have not supplied. What a challenge is this to our hearts. May they have grace to reply to it with thankful acknowledgment for the past, with earnest perseverance and watchfulness as to the present, with bright hope and careful provision for the future. So may He end his controversy with us.

SERMON XII.

THE TIME FOR WORK.

JOHN xi. 9, 10.

"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

THE disciples of our Lord were afraid of his being killed by the Jews, if He went amongst them again; and therefore begged Him to stay where He was. But our Lord would not let any considerations of death or of life, interfere with the great work for which He had been sent into the world, and therefore answers them in the words of the text, by which He means to say, The day is of a certain length, sufficient for all work; and then there is light by which we can walk and work: so we must do our work while it is day. We cannot see to work in the night, when we stumble, if we

walk. Even so I must work while yet I am in the light and life of this world, and must not be frightened from it by any consideration. All must be done now. It will be too late when I have left the world. So He says in another place, "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work[1]."

Now our blessed Lord is the example of all true Christians; and if such was his watchfulness and diligence in performing his work, which was the work of our salvation, ought not ours to be such also, whose work is also the work of salvation? Our Lord's work was to procure us the means of salvation. Our work is to put to use those means. His work was to save us. Ours is to save ourselves through Him. Ought we not to work, indeed, with equal diligence? To Him, the not undertaking this work would, according to our notions, as men of this world, have been no loss, but a gain. To us it is the loss of everlasting life. His work finished with giving his life for us. Our work ends in receiving life through his death. Ought we not indeed to work?

As the day has its appointed number of twelve hours, so our life has its appointed number of years, to some more, to some fewer, and seldom to any one exceeding threescore

[1] John ix. 4.

and ten. Then the day of life, the time for work, is past: and the darkness and night of the grave cometh, in which no man can work. Now, therefore, is our day; and we must work daily, while it is called to-day. Now the Sun of righteousness shineth to enlighten our hearts, and the sun in the heavens to direct our hands to works of love and holiness. But in the grave both suns will have set for ever to such as would not make use of their light for work. And what shall be done in the darkness of the pit of death?

See how careful all men, who care at all, are to make good use of the day for their work. They rise early, they go to bed late, that they may not lose even the first and last minutes of the precious light. Never leave until to-morrow, what you can do to-day, is the saying and doing of every wise and industrious man. And the man who does the contrary, and never does to-day what he can put off till to-morrow, is acknowledged by every one to be on the road to ruin. Shall we not then put into practice these maxims of common sense, in the case of so great a work as our salvation to eternal life? Shall the meat and drink, which go to the support of this life, which is not long, have our constant and careful labour? and shall the food and support of the life which has no end, be not worth even a thought? Only let us consider, by an example or two, what men will do in

things of this life, and what they will not do in things of the life to come.

Does a man delay day after day, and stay until the weeds have choked his corn? Does he not take them in time, while yet they have not grown to a height, and have done no hurt? He knows that there is a time for this: and none, but such a sloven as the world seldom sees, allows this time to go by.

Is he equally watchful about the work of weeding the thoughts of his own heart? Into the field of the best hearts tares will find their way. The enemy is sowing them continually every moment that poor human nature is off the watch: in the moment that she is tired, and nods to sleep, he is at work. Shall they then be allowed to grow up, and choke the good seed of God in the heart? Not so, says the wise and good Christian, and therefore daily takes his heart to task, examines well its ground, sees that it be clean and clear; and wherever he discovers a plant of Satan's sowing, he instantly roots it up, though his heart may bleed for it. He knows that the work is one which cannot be put off without danger. Whatever Satan sows in the heart of man, so well agrees with its natural soil, that it takes deep root downward, shoots a vigorous stalk upward, and may in time defy the hand of the strongest man to pull it up: its root twines itself amidst all the cares of life, all the joys of the heart, all the thoughts

of the mind: it must therefore be pulled up in time, or it will bring the life itself up with it.

But is it so commonly taken in time? Alas! many have so neglected the culture of their hearts, that they cannot tell the weeds from the corn; so ignorant are they of the difference between things of this world and the world to come; so little have they cared to discern the evil from the good, and way of the world from the word of God. But when the difference is well known and understood, how great is the reluctance too often to begin upon this work. How is it continually put off until to-morrow, until to-morrow, until at last there is no to-morrow left but the last day.

So again, does a man neglect the repairs of a house until the wind and rain find an open way in, and bring it down upon his head? Does he not well know that there is a time within which this work must be done, and beyond which it cannot be done? But how grievously is this body, the house and tabernacle of the immortal soul, neglected. Meat, indeed, and drink, and clothing, are anxiously sought for it. But is that all that it requires? It would be if, after it had once returned to the dust, it was never to rise out of it again. But what if in this body, raised from the dead, and glorified to the likeness of that of the Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful shall behold their Saviour with their own eyes, and shall dwell in his visible presence

for evermore? Surely it requires more and much higher care than that for meat, and drink, and clothing. It requires to be kept in a state of preparation for so glorious a condition. It must be swept from all that defileth, it must be garnished with all that sanctifieth. And for every evil affection and unspiritual desire which has impaired this noble building, and brought it into the slightest appearance of ruin and decay, repair must be made by repentance. We are required by our profession to keep it as a vessel of spiritual health, honour, and sanctification. As to its mere health of flesh and outward honour, there never was need of a preacher to call the attention of men to that. Medicine, meats, fine raiment, seats in high places, will always be sought for it as long as the world endures. But its health as a companion of the soul and spirit, its wholeness, its cleanness as a vessel of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, by the subjection of its desires to the pure and undefiled law of God, this is not the thing about which men in general feel most concern, nor is it the work to which they give most of their pains. On the contrary, it is the thing which they do not like to think of, even drive off the thoughts of; and it is the work which they are unwilling to undertake, and put off from day to day. But day after day, some fresh opening is made by the daily assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and from day to day the ruin goes on, until the house falls

into the dust. And then the twelve hours of the day of life are run out, and the night of the grave, in which no one can work, is come. The work was to be done in the body; but the body has been dissolved into ruins in the dust. The work was to have been done by the light of the sun; but the light of the sun can be no longer seen.

Thus we see how very differently men behave, where their lot in this world, and their lot in the world to come, is concerned. For the work of this world they will not lose one of the twelve hours of the day, nor spend one beam of the sun in vain: for the work of the world to come, they will continually wait for the day to come. The present day is never the time: to-morrow seems always a fitter time. And yet how often would it be better to put off the worldly work of to-day? For it may be a work of evil passion, on which it were better to sleep a night, and so perhaps come to a better mind. It may be a work of temptation, on which it were better to stop a day and think, and so come to a knowledge of its real nature, and escape the danger. It may be a work of the Devil's strong delusion, which it were better to put off, that so in the meanwhile the veil may fall from the eyes, and the snare may be discovered. Ten thousand works there are, yea more than the tongue of man through life can tell, which, coming from such a spirit as they do, had better

be put off, not only until to-morrow, but for ever and ever. But not one work is there, which, coming from the operation of the Holy Spirit of God, should be put off for a single day. Now is the acceptable time for that. There is a time for all things; and the time for serving God is always to-day: the morrow will then take care of itself.

Twelve hours hath God, on the average through the year, assigned to the day, and twelve to the night. Twelve for light and work; and twelve for darkness and rest. And though we sometimes hear of persons of such preposterous folly, and depraved habits, as to turn day into night, and night into day, yet men accept this distribution from God's hands, and put it to account in all the common affairs of life. And every hour of the day is numbered, and has its particular employment. And when the night is come, the thrifty man looks back with satisfaction on the day past, and forward in hope on the morrow to come. And shall the man who has at heart the world's thrift be the only one to do this? Shall his regularity and economy of time put to shame the man who has taken in hand the great work of salvation? Shall such a work stand still, while the other is actively going on? And when, too, it is a work of fear and trembling, because God hath appointed for it particular instruments, of which we must learn the use in good time; and hath set for it

particular seasons, after which he allows none other? Shall such a work, the work of life, be put off from day to day, while works of death have their labourers, and the hours of the day in abundance? Shall he, who seeks the gift of God in eternal life, be outdone in zeal, in attention, in regularity, in pains-taking, in skill, in every thing that makes a good workman, by him who is only seeking such wages as this world can give? Why should it be so? He has just as much time, yea, and more; for no weather can hinder his work. His tools are heavenly instruments, which grow sharper by use, and cannot wear out. He has continual direction, so that he needs do nothing in vain, or twice over. He has a master whose wages are sure at the end of the day. And if every day he has more to do, as the improving Christian surely has, yet every day he is more able to do it, and does it with greater satisfaction and delight: for it is no task; it is the necessary exercise of his renewed nature; it is the voluntary motion of the new life that is within him; it is the regular putting forth the experience of his new knowledge, his new reflections. Shall such a work, the most excellent of all, and whose effects endure for ever, be the last begun, and the worst done?

There are twelve hours to the day; and of this our very clocks admonish us. The precious hours of the forenoon are announced with many

strokes of their bell; and then from noon a fresh reckoning begins, and warns us that we are come to the last half of the day, and are on our road to midnight again. And we take the warning of this dumb, insensible creature of our own hands, and arrange our work accordingly. But shall our ear of flesh alone be open, and to works in the flesh? Shall we not, if we be walking by faith, and working in the Spirit, hear the voice which says, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard[1]?"

It is the voice of Him who calleth us to the work of salvation, who hath given his only-begotten Son to die that we might live through Him, who hath sent his Holy Spirit of adoption, whereby we should be able to say unto Him, Abba, Father. He would have us live, however we may prefer death. He would have us at his work of liberty, however we may prefer the task-work of the bondage of sin. He would have us his sons, however we may prefer to be slaves of his adversary.

How many of those who awoke this morning, will never see through the twelve hours of the day! How many have even by this time done with their account of time, and entered into that state where time is no more! But we are still seeing the light of this world; we are still walking in its broad open day. We can still

[1] Matt. xxi. 28.

see the work which the Lord has for us, and use the tools of heavenly temper which He has given us. Oh! even as the sky reddens before the darkness comes on, so may our daily work in the Lord give us a cheerful token of "well done," before we lay ourselves down to rest. Then, come the night of the grave when it will, we may look forward in joyful hope to the bright substance of the last calling, when He shall invite the faithful into his mansions with the gracious words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

SERMON XIII.

ALL QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

(*Fifth Sunday after Easter.*)

JOHN xvi. 23 (part of).

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing."

MANY were the questions which the disciples had put to their Lord in the pride and ignorance of their as yet imperfectly spiritualized hearts. They had asked Him, which is greatest in the kingdom of heaven [1]? They had asked Him, if they should bid fire come down from heaven, and consume their adversaries [2]? They had asked Him, if at this time He would restore the kingdom to Israel [3]? and but a few moments ago they were desirous to ask Him the meaning of that which He had spoken. But our Lord says, that in that day, when He shall have seen them again after his death and resurrec-

[1] Matt. xviii. 1. [2] Luke ix. 54. [3] Acts i. 6.

tion, and shall have given them his Holy Spirit the Comforter, they shall ask Him no more such questions, for that He, whom He should send, the Spirit of truth, should guide them into all truth, and they should know things to come. And they should not only ask nothing in the way of information, but they should want nothing, for whatsoever they should ask the Father in his name, He would give it them.

And this assurance, and this promise, has come down to every disciple of Christ. What question is there that we need to put to our Lord? what further promise do we need to embolden us to prayer? The grand question of all, the one question that contains and sums up every other that man can think to ask, is, "What shall I do to be saved?" And that question has long ago been distinctly answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But, for the sake of illustration, let us put this question under some of its many particulars. Shall a man ask of Christ, "Are my sins forgiven unto me? answer me, by showing me some token of it." He has been answered already. Instead of asking Christ, he has to ask his own heart and conscience before Christ, and see whether they return the answer of Christ, who has promised forgiveness unto all that truly turn unto Him. Have they been truly turned unto Him? Is the heart pure and

undefiled? is the conscience clear and undisturbed? Is the heart obedient? is the conscience watchful? Is the heart in communion with the Holy Spirit? is the conscience directed by Christ's word? Are thus sins forsaken? Then there is at once, and on the spot, a plain answer, that sins are forgiven.

Again, shall a man ask of Christ, "Wilt thou be my helper and defender?" He has been answered already. Does he make Christ his help and defence, his rock and his fortress? Does he put himself into his hands, in all the confidence of a living faith, content to abide the issue, whatever it may be, even as to the things seen and temporal? Does he meditate on his word, receiving it as food from his shepherd? Does he look to Him for direction, and follow it, making Him, indeed, the bishop of his soul? Does he use the means which He has furnished through his Holy Spirit, for the flock of which He is shepherd, making them the pasture of his Spirit? If his heart and conscience say yes to all this, then he has received a clear answer, and needs no other.

Does a man ask of Christ, "Shall I inherit eternal life?" He has been answered already. Is he really and earnestly seeking eternal life, striving with all his strength to enter in? Is he lifting up his heart to heavenly things, and his foot above the stumbling-block of earthly things? Is he reaching on to the things which are

before, and forgetting the things which are behind? Are his affections set on the things which are above? Is his conversation in heaven? Has he entered there in spirit through the way which Christ hath opened, through the access which Christ hath procured? Is his treasure there? Are his hopes laid up there? Is it the appointed end of the way in which he is going? Is he walking with God? Is he following Christ who hath gone up into heaven? If his heart and conscience tell him this, has he not had an answer sufficient and convincing? Will he tempt Christ by asking twice over?

And in that last hour, when men are so desirous of knowing whither they are going, and so often call upon Christ to assure them, amid their distressing doubts and painful fears, shall a man ask of Christ, whither am I going? He has been answered already most distinctly, most decidedly. Let him ask his own heart and conscience upon which road he has been travelling; where has the Lord found him, when the fear of approaching death surprised him? Was he on the narrow road of holiness, or on the broad road of sin? Was his way upward, as of one that was following Christ through a resurrection from the death of sin? or was it downward, by continuance in the death of sin? Was it the way which Christ went, and pointed out to his disciples? or was it the way of a sinful world? Would his next

step have been in the footsteps of Christ, or in the track of his own wilfulness; in the paths of obedience, or in the wanderings of disobedience? If he will ask these questions of his heart and conscience, they will tell him at once, without mistake or delusion, and may warn him to such repentance as may yet be possible. But if he decline this search, and expect an answer from any other quarter, then assuredly, instead of having it from Christ, who is the truth, he will have it from the father of lies.

These few plain examples are sufficient to show how at this day we have no question to ask of Christ. He has already given a distinct answer to every possible question that can be asked, if we will but have faith to ask where He has bidden us ask, namely, in the book of his own blessed word, and in the secret chamber of a heart instructed in that word, believing in that word, obeying that word, and daily growing in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, by faithful use of the means of grace, and diligent application of the instruments of heavenly knowledge.

See therefore the blessedness of the Christian, he has no doubts; the words of his Master are yea and amen, and he has heard them distinctly. That is surely but an indifferent servant who requires his orders to be repeated from his Master's mouth again and again: he has no

perplexities; the direction of the Lord, and the truth and comfort of the Holy Spirit, drive away all darkness and uncertainty from his course. He has no fears; he is bidden to be strong, and of good courage, and is a soldier that can both endure hardness and stand in the fight; he does not therefore impatiently ask for a sign as unbelievers do, and even think the while that they thereby show their belief. He is content to await in the patience of faith the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and meanwhile gathers further and further, clearer and clearer, answers from a heart and conscience well questioned, daily examined. And from their treasury, bringing forth old things and new, old things immediately from the fountain of truth within them, where Christ dwelleth by faith, and the Holy Spirit by illumination, and new things from daily experience of such heavenly communion, and daily practice under such heavenly direction, he proceeds on his way rejoicing, adding continually to his store of faith and hope, and peace and joy.

And thus we see that Christ has beforehand answered all possible questions for us, so that we should not need to ask any thing in that way of Him. And that He has referred us for the answers to the affections of our hearts, and the light of our consciences. If they will not tell us, neither will He tell us. He has provided all possible means that the affections of our hearts

should be purified, that our consciences should be enlightened, that the truth may dwell in them by his Word and his Spirit. Whose fault is it if they be unclean and dark, and so utterly disqualified from delivering an oracle of God in answer to our questions, that we tempt the Lord to answer for us this question, and that question, as if He had never given an answer to every question already; as if He had never uttered the words, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing." Our business now in this day is, to be able rather to give an answer to Him, than to expect one from Him to us. For we are in the place of pupils, whom their instructor has taught every thing that they required. And then He makes this knowledge sure in them, and extends its growth and application in their minds, by putting questions to them, and making them work out the answers for themselves, without his telling them any thing further. So Christ has been our schoolmaster, to bring us up for the profession of serving God in holiness and praise and joy for ever. He hath taught us all things that it is expedient that we should know. And now we have, from the daily examination of our hearts, from the daily review of our practice, to give answers to ourselves concerning the many and momentous points of our education. Christ will tell us no more, because He has told us all, and has enabled us to remember all, and it is all our own fault

if we forget. But if we nourish a growing faith, and put to full account the means of the grace of his Holy Spirit, then we shall be guided into all truth, and all that our Lord hath spoken shall be brought to our remembrance. Thus we shall proceed in a way of preparation for the last day of account, for the last searching examination, when we shall have to give answers to our Lord and Judge concerning all that He hath given and taught us. Then we shall all undergo strict examination as to our fitness for the kingdom of heaven. Then we shall have to render an account of that which we have done with the knowledge which He gave us, with the time which He allowed us, with the favourable situation for the work of salvation in which He placed us, with the many and manifold gifts in body, soul, and spirit, which we have received, both as children of Adam, and as members of his Church. All questioning will then be openly on his side, and all answering openly also on ours. Even the prayer of our petitions will then cease, for there will be nothing left to ask for in that day. Only the prayer of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving shall remain, and that shall remain for all eternity.

For offering such prayer before the everlasting throne in the world to come, we must qualify ourselves by prayer in this. And how shall we do this without a proper knowledge of ourselves

in the sight of God. The cry of Lord, Lord, will do nothing, unless we also do his will. And we know, or ought to know his will, because He has given us his word so fully, that we have no need to ask Him any thing. Therefore it is, that in the remainder of this verse it is written immediately after the words of the text, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." A most gracious promise, indeed, but such as we cannot have fulfilled for us, unless we walk in such a way as the words of the text signify to us; that is, by a diligent improvement of that knowledge which He has given, without tempting Him to give twice over to our idleness and inattention that which He has given once for all to be carefully studied, and watchfully put to account, and exemplified with holy conversation of life.

O how strongly do those words, "Ye shall ask me nothing," remind us that He hath given us all things! And how strongly should the consideration that He has given us all things remind us that we have to answer for the use of all things! Food, shelter, and clothing, have been given to our body, the means of everlasting life and joy have been prepared and applied to our souls, the knowledge of God in our Lord Jesus Christ has been revealed to our spirits; in our whole man, if we be Christ's, we have had the gift of Christ as a Redeemer from death, and

Saviour to eternal life, the gates of heaven have been opened, the doors of the infernal prison-house have been shut, we have been brought to the healing and cleansing fountains of the blood of Christ, and of the water of the Holy Spirit, so that, becoming clean, we may be fit to enter that place into which shall enter nothing that is unclean and worketh abomination and maketh a lie, but only they that have been written in the book of life of the Lamb[1]. After such a list of mercies and gifts, what can we think of which has not been given us? How shall we dare to tempt Him to give more, when we find thus the full truth of his declaration, that we shall ask Him nothing?

[1] Rev. xxi. 27.

SERMON XIV.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF GOD'S SAINTS.

MATT. x. 31.

"Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

IT was not because man has wisdom and the sparrow has none; man has the dominion over all living things upon earth, and the sparrow is one of the least worthy of notice among them. Man has a body and soul, which, if he lose, not all the gold and precious stones of this world, or of millions of worlds, can avail to redeem them from destruction in hell, but the dead sparrow is sold for half a farthing, and there is an end of it; man was made in the image of God, and the sparrow only after its kind. It was not for these reasons, I say, that our Lord told his disciples that they were better than many sparrows. He was speaking to his followers, and addressing them as his disciples indeed; and this assurance of the pre-

ciousness of man in the eyes of God is given to such as do indeed follow Him. True indeed it is that God has a general care over all men. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, and so increases the condemnation of their unthankfulness. But it is to the true disciples of his doctrine, the sincere believers in his word, the lovers of Him and keepers of his commandments, that He gives the gracious encouragement, that they should not fear, for that they are of more value than many sparrows. They are precious to Him; they have been renewed into his own image, in righteousness and true holiness; they have been conformed to the image of his dear and only begotten Son; they have been redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish; they are vessels of honour, temples of his Spirit, children of his kingdom, heirs of everlasting life, sons brought to glory. Can such be otherwise than precious to Him? and shall not such, who are indeed seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, have, according to promise, all the rest, that is, the necessaries of this life added unto them?

Behold, then, the blessedness of those that seek and serve the Lord. They need not to be afraid for any thing. They are assured, that

so precious are they, that the very hairs of their head have been numbered, that God should not lose them. Here is security and safety, here is privilege and honour. Why, then, when such a state has been so freely offered, will men be so slow to accept? What a veil must there be upon their eyes, what blindness upon their hearts! What a proof is here of his corruption, and of his loss of that heavenly knowledge, according to which he was the image of God.

Is it not melancholy to think, that a creature with such a call before him, with an especial invitation to God's presence, with an especial promise of his help, should so avoid his presence, so distrust his help? Yet so it is. For see the lives of too many of those who profess and call themselves Christians, and would be very angry with any one who refused to call them so. Do they press into his courts, and come before his presence with a song, on the day when the Lord calls all the children of God before his throne, to give Him public blessing, praise, and adoration, for his mercies and benefits? Or do they not rather exercise the very first thoughts of their hearts on that morning in devising their own work, and excusing themselves from God's? They cannot trust God and his promises for a day, no not even for a couple of hours. They can find no leisure for God's work, and never sufficient time for their own. The work of God, which

is deliverance from death and hell, and salvation to eternal life, which is consolation in Christ, and peace with God, through his most precious blood; which is joining the song of angels, and all the blessed company of heaven, in ascribing honour and glory to his name; which is under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and is a service of heavenly joy and gladness for ever and ever; this, forsooth, may stand still; this may be put off on the slightest excuse; this may wait upon their own convenience, and may be taken up, or thrust into a corner, just as they please: but their own work, which at best is to prolong another day, under God's long-suffering, to the perishing body, even another day of forgetfulness of God, of disobedience to his will, and a short reprieve from judgment to come; this cannot be laid aside for a moment, let God call as loudly as He will, let Him promise with a voice from the height of heaven, let Him threaten with a roar from the depths of hell; this must not be put off by any excuse, this must be done first and last, and at all times between.

What is madness, if this be not? What is folly, if this be not? Such persons may possibly be reckoned wise in their generation; but what is their generation but one of spiritual folly, and ignorance of the one thing needful? What wonder, if so far from laying fast hold of the Lord's gracious encouragement, "not to

fear," they are in continual fear? They have no faith in which to trust God, and therefore they lie at the mercy of all the accidents of this world. In the midst of all their carefulness, a black sky will throw a gloom upon their hearts, to say nothing of more serious appearances. The height of their joy is but a momentary release from this fear, which comes on again the stronger for such a rest. And all this but a preparation for that last fear of all, the fear of death and judgment to come. And yet men will not accept the invitation out of this miserable state of bondage. They will go on trusting a world which is continually deceiving them; and trusting themselves, while daily they cheat themselves, and become less and less able to help themselves, and will not trust Him upon whom all things depend, and to whom they owe every breath that they draw, from whom they must receive every good thing that they desire. But let us leave them awhile, to look upon the more excellent way which is followed by the children of the kingdom of heaven.

To them, and them only, the Lord said, fear not: for they are his little flock, which He hath gathered into his fold, into which can enter nothing to do them harm. They have turned their hearts away from the service and wages of a world, which they have found has sin for its service, and death for its wages. They have turned them unto God and the Lord Jesus

Christ, they have set them on heavenly things, they have fixed their hopes upon the things which cannot be changed. What room then is there for uncertainty, and therefore how can they fear? They seek good and perfect gifts, and they come down from "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning[1]." Therefore, they cannot but come according to his promise, and stay for their continual joy and support. They seek a better country. And therefore they follow the footsteps of God the Son, who goes at the head of his people on the way to that country, and hath given an earnest of the inheritance in his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven. They are in continual search of heavenly truth. And therefore they give themselves up into the care of God the Holy Spirit of truth. Nothing therefore is left to uncertainty. How can there be, to such as believe in the word of Him, who hath said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away[2]?" Nothing therefore is left to fear. How can there be, to such as have that perfect love which casteth out fear? Life may change from youth to age, from health to sickness; the year may change from summer to winter, the day may change from morning to evening; the hour may change, yea and the

[1] James i. 17. [2] Matt. xxiv. 35.

very moment, with its infinite variety of circumstances; but all these changes bring no fear, doubt, or uncertainty to hearts which have long found their resting-place in heavenly places, and in which Christ abides by faith, and his Holy Spirit in righteousness. They are unchangeable by any thing of this world. The only change that they look to, is the continual change here, from a glorious to a more glorious conformity unto the image of the Son of God, and the change hereafter of this vile body into the likeness of his glorious body. And there is no fear, but exceeding joyfulness in such a change. They only have to fear, who may be worse off than they now are. And such of course are all who are not living in the faith of the Lord. But they, who must find every change a change for the better, cannot but go on from joy to joy.

And to them, and them only, He has declared that they are of more value than many sparrows. The wicked He will cast down, and utterly destroy, and they shall become as dung for the earth. And well would it be for them, if He had done with them in this body, as He has with the sparrow, which He will never raise from the dust again. But these to whom He hath said, "Fear not," are precious indeed to Him. Do we not hold those things precious, which we have bought at a great price? Count we not those things among our treasures, for

which we make the most careful provision? Are not those things reckoned the most valuable things upon earth, which receive and give out again to our eyes the beams of light, the rays of the sun, as gold and silver, jewels and precious stones? Will not men venture every thing, life and all, for them? And shall not, therefore, Almighty God reckon for precious them, whom his only begotten Son hath redeemed with his most precious blood? Shall He not hold in exceeding value those, for whom He has reserved mansions in his heavenly house, where they may abide for ever? Shall they not be to Him as pearls of great price, as jewels to be numbered up with joyful care, who, being conformed to the image of his Son, who is their light and their righteousness, shine in their works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven; and being built as lively stones upon the chief corner-stone, which is elect and precious, form the spiritual house of his glorious and everlasting temple? They are indeed of more value than many sparrows. The Lord will never lose sight of them. He keeps them as the apple of his eye, and He delighteth in them. Precious in his eyes is their death. How much more precious their life!

Who that would keep his eyes open to these things, would not gladly accept his invitation who says, "Fear not," and commit himself, body and soul, into his hands, who says, that

they are of more value than many sparrows? What blessing is greater than to be delivered from the miserable perplexity of fear, and brought into joy and good courage instead? And what satisfaction can be compared with that of being precious, not in the eyes of men, who in the next hour may reckon cheap as the dust that which they reckoned most precious upon earth, but in the sight of God, the Maker of all? Shall such a privilege be thought nothing worth? Will a man go on fearing that this will not go right, and that that will go wrong, unless he give his whole heart to it, devote all his time to it, and leave no room for God in his heart, and no time for his praise and worship? Can he not have faith enough in Him, who is the very truth, to leave things to his care for one year or two, when, after all, he has to trust his soul and body to Him for everlasting ages? Will he take no delight in the thoughts of being dear to God, and precious in his eyes; have no satisfaction in his holy keeping? What must be the end of such an one? How can he possibly be fit for the kingdom of heaven? What state can be so fearful as this? For what can come out of forgetfulness of God, but unbelief? And what can come out of unbelief, but eternal banishment from the presence of God?

All that think to end with Him, must surely begin with Him. And do they wait to begin

when they are ending their life? They are too wise to begin with the end in things of this world. Why, then, will they be content to be guilty of such stark folly, such absurd contradiction in things of the world to come? Is heaven the reward of pure folly? They would seem to think so. No negligence is so careless, no delay is so desperate, no abuse of means, and waste of time so prodigal, but that they think they may attain possession of heaven. Is it in this way that they seek to attain the possession of any one thing which they value upon earth? Would they not put him down for a prince of madmen, and king of fools, who went to work on any object of this life after such a manner? But so it is. Human wisdom in things of this world, ends in pure folly as to the things of the world to come.

Let such fear now, that they may not fear hereafter. Let them hold themselves vile in the sight of God, through sincere repentance, that they may become precious in his sight for ever and ever. And may the fear of God, and of the world to come, take place in every heart of the fear of man, and of the changes and chances of this fleeting world. Then shall come the joyful satisfaction of being cared for by the Lord. And this is the earnest of the joy of everlasting life in the world to come.

SERMON XV.

FLEE BAD COMPANY.

Acts ii. 40.

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

These words are found in the very first sermon that was preached in the Christian Church; for until the Holy Spirit had come down from heaven, that Church had not begun. And they are the summary of a considerable discourse, in which the preacher testified and exhorted his hearers to repent, and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, that they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. They are words, therefore, of deep significance, and require of us to ascertain their true meaning, and call upon us to exercise what is contained in that meaning.

Observe, first of all, that they were spoken to men who were at least nominally in the

Church of God, for to the Jews they were spoken. And they called upon them to separate themselves from the evil-doers among them. This is the very first thing to be done by such as turn unto God with all their heart and mind. And, therefore, long ago, the prophet Isaiah had said, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing: go ye out of the midst of her: be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord [1]." And not long after, St. Paul says to the Corinthians in nearly the same words, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you [2]." And in the Revelation is made the same awful warning, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

It is, therefore, advice necessary at all times in the Church of God, his people always need its warning. There never has been a day, and there never will be a day to the end of the world, without its untoward generation, from which the true children of God must come out, or they will be partakers of their sins, and receivers of their plagues. For the words of the text, put to their fulness of construction, are these, Come out from this untoward generation, and so be saved from the wrath and judg-

[1] Isaiah lii. 11. [2] 2 Cor. vi. 17.

ment of God, which is coming upon it. If Noah had not separated himself from the untoward generation of his day, he must have perished with it in the flood. And if these three thousand had not obeyed the voice of Peter, and come out from among the untoward generation of the unbelieving Jews, they must have perished together with them in that dreadful destruction which Almighty God shortly after brought upon them. We see, therefore, how enforced by most awful example this warning has come down to us: and what a large demand it makes upon our attention.

The character of the generation of every time is *untoward*. What is the meaning of this word? Untoward is said of any thing which will not go toward, that is, straight onwards, but will go now on this side, now on that, making a crooked path. The beast that rebels against the hand of its driver, pushes now in this direction, now in that, instead of that in which he is required to go. The slimy serpent crawls along, never in one line, but from this side to that side. The man who knows not his road, takes a path now to the right hand, now to the left, and goes not straight forward. The drunkard reels and staggers from side to side, instead of going forward. All these are examples of untowardness. And now is not sin untoward? The path of the commandments of God leads straight forward; but their transgressor

is not found in that path. He has the wilfulness and rebelliousness of the beast that will not be driven. He is a true and close follower of the crooked ways of the old serpent, and walks in his slime of sin. He is ignorant and blind with vanity, and chooses his own crooked road. He is drunk with pride and evil desires, and cannot keep the straight paths of godliness. Such is the character of an untoward generation. In it are found the drunkard, the unchaste, the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the covenant-breaker, the forswearer; and not only these, but all who hold not the truth in righteousness, all who abide in any practice which (they know) is not according to the will of God; all who continue in the neglect of any known duty, all who give God but lip-service instead of life-service, all the careless, all the indifferent, all the selfish.

How many are left in a generation when all these are taken away? Are they not so few that its colour and character are taken from such as these? and, therefore, is not every generation untoward? But on all these the wrath of God comes, as upon children of disobedience. It is a fearful thing to bear in mind, that they who would not hearken to Peter, had consented to the death of Christ; had cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him. We will not have this man, but Barabbas the robber." And even in this world they were consumed by the fire of God's

wrath. It is even so with every untoward generation since. They who have not accepted Christ, as saved, by his death, from their sins; and are not, by a struggle against the power of sin within and without, dying the death unto sin, can they be said to be out of the company of those that consented unto the death of Christ? They who go in the pride of unsubdued flesh, give it a loose rein, and so far from crucifying it, by mortifying it in its corrupt appetites, indulge it in any evil desire that Satan may prompt, can they be said to be clear of the company of those who cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him?" They who give themselves up to the powers of this world, and follow their bidding, and thus loathe the taste of the powers of the world to come, can they be said not to be of those who cried out, "Not this man?"

The more we consider within ourselves, the larger and larger does this sad company appear, and the deep and unsparing searcher of his heart will have frequent alarms, lest he himself be found in the circle thus widened; and if a man be not in it, yet it is around him on all sides, and he must be watchful that he fall not into it. He must bear continually in mind the exhortation of St. Peter, "Save yourself from this untoward generation." And he must be strong and of good courage, to keep himself utterly clear of such company. But here it is that so many fail. They see the sad effects

of evil company, they feel how destructive it is to their own real good, they deplore its seduction of their hearts, and, therefore, they desire to forsake it, they long for an opportunity to quit it. But they have not courage to make one for themselves, and thus they go on waiting and waiting for deliverance, and at the same time become faster and faster bound with the bonds of the society of which their conscience is afraid.

But the exhortation to forsake such company is among the very first. St. Peter could not preach the first sermon in the Church without speaking of it at length. And surely with good reason. He that would forsake sin must begin with forsaking sinners. He that would turn unto God must turn away from the enemies of God. And here is the grand struggle. And yet what is the separating ourselves from old companions, and enduring their mockery, if not their threats and spite, compared with that which Christ hath told us we must do, if need be, for his sake, namely, to forsake father, mother, sisters, brethren, all we have? And with what a spirit of watchfulness should we take heed of falling into evil company? How often are people led into it by careless, unthinking, carnal curiosity? They will go, they say, just to see who are there, or the sort of thing that is going on, but will not mingle with any that do evil. What a vain resolution! They

begin with resolving to see a sin, and be amongst the sinners. What can it end in, but doing the sin, and being sinners? Did any man in his senses ever say, I will go and see the plague, what it is, and I will see those that have it, how they look; but I will not catch it, and be ill of it? No! wherever any breach of any commandment of the Lord is going on, that is no place for the true Christian. Can a Christian man stay in company where the Lord's day is broken, where God's name is taken in vain, where Christ is put to open shame by the evil practices of men who take his name upon them by calling themselves Christians, where scoff, lewd merriment, and unseemly language take up the time which should be given to prayer and praise in the name of Jesus Christ; can any man stay in such company, endure its sights and sounds, and, as a Christian should, maintain himself in the company of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? No surely, for, as St. Paul asks, What concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

We must save ourselves, we are told, from this untoward generation. If we be Christ's, we are then holy vessels, which must not be put to the common use of the world. Our bodies are then vessels of sanctification and honour, and we must remember the words of the Prophet which I have before reminded you of,

"Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord;" and the words of the Apostle, who asks, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness[3]?" Our profession is to have come out from such company, to abhor the touch of all unclean things, to have departed from the city of evil-doers, and to have removed and taken our place, far away thence, in the city of the living God, amid the company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect, and Christ the mediator of the new covenant.

The Lord gave warning to Noah to escape from the judgment of the flood, the Lord gave warning to Lot to escape from the brimstone and fire which He was about to rain upon the city of the ungodly, the Lord gave warning to his disciples to flee from Jerusalem before He brought the fire and the sword upon it. And so He now warns all his servants every where to come out from amid the untoward generation around them, to separate themselves from its sins, and so to save themselves from the plagues of that everlasting judgment which shall be revealed in fire on the last day. If even in the eyes of man's justice, the lookers-on at unlawful doings are considered as partakers in them, for their business was either to be out of the way, or active against them, how much more

[3] 2 Cor. vi. 14.

shall Almighty God execute his law which He has distinctly made known to us, that He will treat as a sinner the companion of sinners? How can any one be in their company without sin, were it only because God has forbidden such company, whatever we may think its consequences? Therefore let every one calling himself Christian, remember that he claims to be one of a peculiar people, a member of the Church of God, which Christ hath purchased for Himself with his own blood. And let him be assured, that in such company alone is salvation, and in every other judgment, and wrath, and everlasting destruction.

SERMON XVI.

THE SIN OF BAD EXAMPLE.

Acts ix. 4.

"Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me?"

There is little danger, we may hope, of our being concerned in the immediate meaning of these words, by persecuting Christ through persecuting his disciples, or by being persecuted ourselves by others. Yet as no part of Scripture is without its lesson at all times, and to all persons, if it be read for the sake of reproof, of correction, of instruction in righteousness, and with a watchful eye on practice, we shall find something for us here. And that is the grand and awful truth, that Christ considers Himself one with his disciples. They are members of his body, and therefore He considers their sufferings as his sufferings, and their welfare as his welfare. He defends their cause as his own, and if He do not interfere openly in

this world, as He did when Saul was ravaging his flock, He will, in the world to come, when at the last day He shall say to one party, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;" and to another, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." According, therefore, to this rule, Judas is not the only one who has betrayed Christ, but every one has betrayed Him who has betrayed a Christian brother. The disciples that forsook Him were not the only persons that forsook Him, but Demas forsook Him, when he forsook St. Paul. In short, the very sum and substance of true Christian fellowship is, that we should do unto each other as we would do unto Christ Himself; who has expressly told us, that He considers Himself to be represented to us in every Christian brother.

Now let us go to a few consequences of this doctrine. How different, all in one moment, do things appear! how altered from that shape in which worldly fellowship placed them! What a heavy responsibility comes down upon us! We are indeed no longer our own, we are to live no longer to ourselves, but unto the Lord; we are members one of another, our head and our body being Christ. Our fellowship is not to be for a season, and for our own worldly convenience; it is to be for everlasting, and for our eternal salvation. We see Christ not only within us, in our

spirits, as our death unto sin, and new life unto righteousness, dwelling in our hearts by faith; but we see Him also without us, in the bodies of others, stirring us up there also by his representatives, and calling our inward faith into outward practice, through the many and manifold circumstances of our dealings with them. And thus we find ourselves in a school of preparation for the glorious company which shall surround our Lord on his throne, in his heavenly kingdom for ever and ever. Need I go on to say how all our duties now look, how the very ten commandments now look, how the sins against our neighbour are sins against Christ, both as man and God? It is a wide prospect indeed that has been opened, and glorious as it is wide. But the time will allow us but a look or two; these, therefore, I will attempt to direct, taking such as are afforded more immediately by the words of the text.

They are words of reproof. They complain of ill-treatment. How then can they apply to us? But if they be found to apply, how grievously are we offending the gracious and merciful Saviour, who condescends thus to remonstrate and argue with us? "Why persecutest thou me?" What a heart-rending question to be put, under any sense whatever, to our hearts and consciences, by the voice of our merciful Saviour and strict Judge. And yet

may it not thus be put? Let us only consider awhile.

First of all, consider the effects of bad example generally. Nothing ravages the flock of Christ more cruelly, nothing tears his precious members asunder more violently, nothing offends his disciples more grievously. To accustom the eyes and ears of our Christian neighbours to the sights and sounds of sin and forgetfulness of God, is doing them a grievous harm. If they be even strong and established in the faith, then it is doing violence to their Christian feelings: but if they be weak and unsettled, it is tempting them to sin, and setting a stumbling-block in their way. When the Lord's name is taken in vain, when the Sabbath is broken, when strong drink has overcome the heart and head, when bad words of reviling and cursing are poured forth, how little do the offenders think of the wide and deep mischief which they are doing, not only to themselves, but to others! They are poisoning the hearts, wounding the consciences of every Christian brother around them. And do they think that the heavenly Shepherd is asleep, and careth not for his sheep all this time? Yes, He careth, and if their conscience were not asleep, they would hear Him saying, "Why dost thou worry my lambs? Why dost thou slaughter the souls of my disciples? Sinner, sinner, why

dost thou persecute me?" Blessed is the hour when the sinner hears this voice in the secret of his conscience, and falling to earth answers with the voice of penitence and thankful acknowledgment of his awful presence, "Who art thou, Lord?"

But if their conscience be deaf to this remonstrance, then is it not a sad thing to be thus in the condition of the wicked Herod, who, though he had put James to death, and sought Peter's life also, never heard the words, "Herod! Herod! why persecutest thou me?" Will they reckon their not having had that reproof addressed to them, and their being given up, as reprobate, to their sins, an enviable privilege?

And now, more particularly, is it not our especial business, as brethren in Christ, to do all things to edification? How much rather then to see that we offend not in any thing! What a duty then in us all is Christian watchfulness! How carefully should we look at what we have in our hearts, before we let it issue from our lips, and from our hands! Christ is present, the Lord is in our company, not only spiritually, the witness of the workings of our inmost heart, but bodily also, as represented by our Christian brethren, with their eyes and ears open, and especially by his little ones, concerning whom He hath said, "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were

hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea[1]." Their minds are young and fresh, and take the seed of what they hear and see readily, and soon bring forth the fruit. In short, we are surrounded on every side by brethren, representing Christ unto us, baptized as we have been in the name of Christ, made partakers, as we have been, in the benefits of his death, fed from the same table, made to drink of the same Spirit, admitted to the same promises, and we cannot stir among them without doing some good or evil towards them, and therefore without obeying or resisting Christ, as represented in them. And if a man walk in carelessness, who can tell the harm that he may do to a brother in Christ, however little he may intend it, however unwilling he may be to do any such thing knowingly? How great, then, must be the mischief done by those who walk wilfully according to their own affections and lusts, and how can any love of Christ dwell in their hearts, how can there be really any thing but hatred of Him there, when some will even make sport and mirth of sin, not caring how many, and even striving how many, they can drag into the same mire of ungodliness with themselves! Thus they afflict the Church of God, thus they ravage its fold, and make the Chief Shepherd, our Lord Christ, to cry, "Why persecutest thou me?"

[1] Matt. xviii. 6.

We must walk circumspectly, we must do every thing to avoid setting a stumbling-block in the way of a brother in Christ, we must live in continual fear of hearing from an offended Saviour the lowest, faintest whisper of the words, "Why persecutest thou me?" And therefore we must ever look onward to the honour and glory of our Lord Christ, which is so deeply concerned in the welfare of his people, for they, if faithful, are one with Him, and if not faithful, require our endeavours that they should become so faithful that they may be one with Him: and still more, they require our personal endeavours that we should not be in the least accountable for any hindrance to the attainment of that happy state. We should not only avoid evil, but even the appearance of evil, and not think it a trouble or inconvenience, or the least cost or sacrifice, to step out of our ordinary way, if our goings, however innocent in themselves, should happen, by giving a handle to misrepresentation, or from whatever other circumstance, to be in their way. This is the circumspection of the man who walks in the love of Christ, who sees Christ in his Christian brethren by representation, and on his throne in heaven in spirit, and hears Him in his conscience, crying out thence, in behalf of his injured flock against all that ravage it, and persecute its souls by sinful walking, "Why persecutest thou me?"

When the Apostle St. Paul heard those

words, he was indeed (as far as Christ was concerned) a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. And he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief[2]. He thought that he was doing God service in persecuting the Church of God beyond measure, for he thought it a synagogue of Satan rather. None of us can plead his ignorance. Can we expect therefore, if we offend at all in like manner, to obtain the mercy which he obtained? In fact, we have had that mercy already. For what did St. Paul obtain but a knowledge of salvation from sin by faith in Christ, a call into his Church into which he was shortly after admitted by baptism, and a promise of everlasting life after death? If the lives of any of us should declare that they despise this mercy, what will be left for them to obtain? We begin, therefore, you see, where this transaction of St. Paul ends, and therefore our business is to be like St. Paul, after these words had been spoken unto him; like him to edify the brethren by good example, to see Christ continually present in them, doing unto them as He would have us do to Him, were He to be any one of them. Like him to exercise that charity which concerns not the bodies only, but the souls also of the brethren, and by which a man serves the Lord diligently, withstanding not only temptation to himself, but also the least occasion in himself of temptation to others.

[2] 1 Tim. i. 13.

Thus we shall have the love of Christ in us, and also the love of Christ on us. And what that love of Christ on his people is, this passage of Scripture plainly declares. He was sitting in the splendour of his glory on the throne of heaven, when He beheld his flock in danger of the persecutor. And immediately He interfered with a voice, and a glorious shining from that throne, and struck the persecutor speechless to the ground. That flock which He has purchased with his blood upon earth, He feeds and watches from heaven. If Christ then so love us, we ought to love one another. If He so regard his flock, we should regard it also, and be watchful against doing it any harm, and awake to opportunities of doing it all good. We should remember that the persecutor of the soul is the worst persecutor of all, and that every one is a persecutor of the souls of the brethren who endangers and perhaps even kills them, and at least does all he can to kill them, by the bad example and evil teaching of corrupt conversation of life, of disobedience to God's commandments, and neglect of his ordinances. Let not that day ever come that any one of us, having the blood of his brother on his head by giving occasion to such temptation to sin, should deserve that remonstrance of an indignant Saviour, "Why persecutest thou me?"

SERMON XVII.

THE YEAR'S LAST DAY.

PSALM cxliv. 4.

"Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away."

How more than usually impressive are these words, when we have pronounced them, in the course of the Psalms, not only on the last day of the month, but also of the year! What a proof do they bring with them of their truth, when we repeat them standing upon the brink of another year, while the last few spans of the present year are passing away from beneath our feet, and so little is left, that even the time of our service of praise here has brought us perceptibly nearer to the close! We have no longer to measure this year by days, no not even by hours, but by minutes and seconds. How shortly will it be gathered to the 1843 years, which will have passed since our Lord came in the flesh, born of a pure virgin! How shortly

will its whole course be taken away from the sum of those years which have yet to run before the Lord comes again in his glorious majesty! And to speak of ourselves individually, what a large portion has been added to the days of the younger! How very much more have they now to account for than they had at this time last year! And what a large portion has been taken out of the remainder of the lives of the elderly: and how much nearer are they brought to that day when they must render an account of their use of the years, and months, and days, which the mercy and long-suffering of God hath continued unto them! Should a day, which brings such solemn thoughts to our mind, be suffered to pass over without remark? especially, when in addition to the awakening words of the text, its service of praise informs us that, when man's "breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish[1]."

Man is like to vanity. That is, he is like unto those empty and unsubstantial things, such as vapour and smoke, which are so thin and bodiless, that you cannot handle them; and are so fleeting, that even while you are looking at them, they have vanished away, without leaving a trace behind. When the breath of a man is gone from out of him, what remains behind?

[1] Ps. cxlvi. 4.

What but a lifeless lump of flesh, with no more sense in it than there is in the chimney from which the smoke is gone forth? And every hour this breath of life is going, in final departure, forth from some one or other. Every hour do I say? Yes, every minute, taking but the population of this island in which we live; for there die among us, in the course of a year, somewhat more than half a million, and the number of minutes in a year is somewhat more than half a million. So there is, on an average, as nearly as can be, a death to every minute. And even during the time that we shall have been assembled here, using the blessed privileges of worship and praise, and exercising the means of salvation to eternal life, full one hundred of our countrymen will have passed from this mortal state into that which admits of no repentance, of no work of salvation; unto the grave, which cannot praise God; unto death, which cannot celebrate Him; unto the pit which cannot hope for his truth[2]. And yet the world will go on as before: next year will be spent as this has been spent; and though death will not be defrauded, by all our arts and inventions, of one jot of his yearly tribute of half a million, life will be as full of carelessness about the future, and of forgetfulness of the powers of the world to come, as ever. Though we be all walk-

[2] Isa. xxxviii. 18.

ing, in our course of this life, over a thin crust of earth, which every moment breaks, and lets down some one or another into the pit of the general grave beneath; yet few are the survivors that will intermit either toil or pleasure, or prepare against the minute of their own disappearance from this earthly scene.

And man's days are as a shadow that passeth away. You see the shadow of a cloud on the landscape, and in the next moment when you look for it again, it is gone. You see the shadow of a building on the ground, in the next moment a cloud comes across the sun, and the shadow has gone, nor left a single mark behind. Should the day be so uninterruptedly bright, that the shadow of the dial should point every hour from sunrise to sunset, yet then it has come to an end, and is no more seen; and together with it the day that it marked out is gone. And thus day goes after day from the life of man, and all his days are as a shadow that passeth away. This year is now fast bringing its shadows to an end. The last beam that this day's sun shall throw will form the last shadow of the year. And, on looking back, how fleeting and transitory appear all those joys and cares which were so engrossing in their day! they now survive but in memory, mere images of light and shadow in the mind. And well would it be for all such as have not repented themselves of their evil life, and unprofitable use of God's

gifts, if the memory of them did not survive in those books which shall be opened at the last day. But there they are, written in their true characters, which, when this life shall be over, nothing can avail to change. As yet the blood of Christ can avail through repentance and faith to blot out the hand-writing that is against the sinner. But then they will have gone beyond the reach of change; and such as they were at the last day of the man's life, such will they be at the last day of this world, when Christ shall return to judge the quick and the dead.

O how vain indeed it is to build up hopes in this world, when our days are such as this, a mere shadow which passeth away; when even the dead work of our own hands survives us, and proves to be the less fleeting of the two! Have not these walls of lifeless, senseless stone, seen more than twenty generations of men, one after another, from their baptism to their funeral, and may see twenty more? They are still standing, while all those generations are lying, but as the dust of the earth, around them. How do they rebuke the pride of man, whose breath is in his nostrils; and preach to him in far more forcible strain than words can reach, from the text, "Man is like to vanity. His days are as a shadow that passeth away!"

But then this is but a short part of the history of man, though long enough for all the

rest to depend upon it. Its character for good or bad, for happy or miserable, is determined in this short and transitory life; but it lasts through eternity. Man never entirely dies; his parts are indeed separated, of which the body returns to the dust again, whence it was taken. But the day has been appointed, the notable day, the day of refreshing to the saints of the Lord; the day of vengeance to sinners; when, at the sound of the last trump, the body shall rise again, and shall enclose the soul again in another tabernacle of everlasting glory, or everlasting shame; according to the good or evil which shall have been done in it during this present life. Man shall then no longer be like unto vanity. For his state shall never alter, his condition shall never fleet away, but it shall be one and the same for ever, fixed and settled for all eternity. He shall never escape away from the eye of all living, by becoming the dust of the earth. But the good shall be seen, shall be heard, shall be felt as immortal, substantial beings, by good angels, through endless ages of joy; and the bad shall be seen, shall be heard, shall be felt, as equally immortal, substantial beings, by bad angels, through an eternity of misery. Man's days shall then no longer be likened to the shadow that passeth away. But the sun and moon, that throw the shadows of this world, shall have past away, while his day shall have but

begun. That day can be compared with nothing in this world; for that day is everlasting; and every thing in this world is transitory.

Such is man, a fleeting shadow in this world, an immortal being in the next: under trial and preparation in this world; under retribution and fulfilment in the world to come. And that which concerns us so deeply is, that the time of preparation is so short, while the state for which we are preparing is eternal. But even in this world we often see the whole condition of a man's life depend upon the use of a few moments. A good opportunity, which came and went in a few minutes, but meanwhile was seized hold of, and made good use of, has made a man for life. While again a few moments of carelessness have ruined him for life. So as this life turns upon a moment, eternal life turns upon the few days of this life, the whole sum of which, taken at the longest, are but as a moment in comparison with eternity. Thus we should consider shortness of life as shortness of preparation for the life eternal, and we should endeavour to make that preparation good. We have indeed sufficient time allowed; God's mercy could not allow us less. But we have not more than sufficient; God's justice could not allow us more. Having therefore neither more nor less than sufficient, let us not waste the precious moments in unwatchfulness, as thinking that we have plenty to spare: neither

let us sit down idle in despondency and despair, as having more set us than we can do, and less time allowed us than we require. We have all in sufficiency, if we do indeed look up unto Him who is sufficient for all things. We are not indeed sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, his grace is sufficient for us.

Another year in a few hours more will have been taken away from this precious time. And is it not a time to consider how this year will have been spent? Has the grand work of salvation to eternal life in Jesus Christ advanced in our hands? Do we feel ourselves on the way, steadily going onward toward the mark? Have spiritual battles been fought with the great adversary? Have victories been won, have temptations been overcome? Has Christ been brought to dwell in the heart by faith, has the inner man been strengthened in spiritual might, has love been enlarged, has hope been settled, has peace with God in Christ been obtained? Is longer life desired, not for the sake of its worldly enjoyments, but for the sake of a longer service to our Lord, for the sake of improving in it, for the sake of bringing into some state of good and settled arrangement the work of our heart, even the ministry of our spirits, souls, and bodies to the honour and glory of his name, and the furtherance of his heavenly kingdom? So will the Christian enquire of himself on a solemn occasion like this, when even the most

careless cannot help numbering in some manner the years of his life, and thinking of what may become of him before the new year be added to the old.

But if no preparation has been made, what a warning is there to begin it. When a man has but a day to live, how anxiously he numbers the hours. When, therefore, he has but a few years to live, the sum of which at the longest is not a day in comparison with eternity, should he not as reasonably and as anxiously number the years? And if at the end of one year he find himself as unprepared to meet his God as ever, is not his salvation in great peril and jeopardy? For we find in all our concerns, that the longer we delay to begin a thing, the more unwilling we grow to begin it; we put it off from day to day, until we come to hate the very thoughts of it, and put it out of sight as much as possible. But is not this a sad state of mind to come into as to any good undertaking? how much more, then, in the grand undertaking of all, the work of our salvation? And if work which is of this world, and is therefore not out of the way of our worldly thoughts and habits, can be delayed and put off for ever by growing habits of carelessness, what hope is there that the work of salvation can be ever effected by the man who carelessly puts it off from day to day? For it is quite contrary to our worldly habits, disagreeable to our carnal nature, and

the longer it is delayed the more hardened the heart becomes by worldly service, the more insensible to the necessity of heavenly preparation, the more indisposed to meet the grace of God in his various ordinances; until at length a man studiously avoids all thoughts of a world to come, and gives himself up entirely to this life, without any more knowledge or concern in his heart about heavenly things, than there is in the beasts that perish. Such a man is indeed like unto vanity. His days are as a shadow that passeth away. And when he is gone his place is seen no more.

But the place of the righteous is for ever and ever in the glory of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. There he shall cease to number years of trial and preparation; for he shall dwell in an eternity of glorious rest from his labour, in those habitations which can never fail, in that state where time shall be no more.

SERMON XVIII.

THE USE OF LIGHT.

MARK X. 49.

"And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee."

A BLIND man in deep poverty is indeed a miserable object. Yet what is the misery of his condition compared with that of the man who is blind, not in the eyes of the flesh, but of the spiritual understanding, and who is poor, not in the things of this world, but in the things of the world to come? But our gracious Lord and merciful Saviour had effectual health and help for both. He healed this poor blind man, and came moreover to give light to those whose understanding was so darkened, that they knew not God, and He became poor through his sufferings in the flesh, that they through his poverty might become rich. And this account of the mercy which He showed to the blind and poor in the body, is a lively token of what He

does for man in the spirit. With this view let us examine the account here given.

That we are all by nature blind and poor, as to spiritual things, requires not me to tell you. It is the very foundation on which our belief in Christ as our Redeemer goes. Scripture tells us this from Genesis to Revelation; our own experience tells us this from the cradle to the grave. But however they may confess this truth, men do not consider it sufficiently in their hearts; otherwise there would not be that slowness to avail themselves of the means of deliverance which our Saviour has given. If they were earnestly desirous of seeing God, the grand object of our spiritual sight, would they keep so little watch over the issues of their heart, when Christ hath said, None but the pure in heart shall see God? Would they, by adding sin to sin, in spite of the light of a better knowledge, bring themselves into the desperate state of which it is said, "For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them[1]?"

To be aware of this blindness, and so to seek deliverance from it, is therefore the grand con-

[1] Acts xxviii. 27.

sideration. Let a man then place himself in the presence of Almighty God, and endeavour to see Him in his majesty and glory, with the eyes of his heart and understanding. O how often does He find them blinded by the cares of this world, by the pride and vanity of the flesh, by the delusions of the tempter! So far from seeing God as he would, he does not even steadily keep his eyes upon his commandments, which are the representation of his justice, and expression of his power and dominion. So far from seeing Him on his throne, he in some cases cannot so much as lift up his eyes to his footstool, in considering, as he ought to do, the glory of his works upon earth. Even the man who hath sought Him diligently and so found Him effectually, cannot continue to see Him without continued watchfulness and prayer. If he relax in these, the cloud of the darkness of this world soon takes God out of his sight again. And what is man without all sight of God? Where is his help, where is his hope, where is any thing truly desirable?

And therefore it is that the true child of God, who uses all the means of his enlightening grace, that he may have more light still amid the darkness of the crooked ways of this world, therefore it is that he daily watches the passing by of his Saviour in the daily means, blessings, and opportunities afforded him, and sits, as it were, by the roadside begging, in humble

importunity of prayer. And although at times the infirmity of his nature, which, while it believes, requires help to its unbelief, and the suggestions of the artful tempter, that would have him trust in him and his, rather than in God; though these may sometimes lift up a voice within him, and charge him that he should hold his peace, yet he will not give up his endeavour, he will not let himself be disheartened from persisting in prayer, but becoming stronger from his perseverance, and more abundant in grace, he cries out with the faith which is strengthened by the exercise of patience; yea, he cries the more a great deal, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" And then Jesus, the great Mediator and High Priest, on his throne in heaven, orders him to be called to his presence, and he hears the summons in the joyous motions of his heart, where that Saviour dwells by faith, saying, "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." And then he receives from the Lord's hand that increase of light, that quickness of spiritual sight, for which he prayed, and goes forth to his daily duties under the blessing, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

If such be the daily needs and continual necessities, even of the obedient child of God, what must be the case of such as enjoy that title as members of his Church, but not as doers of his word; as baptized with water, but

not bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit; as relying on having so put off the filth of the flesh, but not careful as to the answer of a good conscience toward God? Surely their need is extreme indeed. And yet they are least aware of it. This is what they require being stirred up to. And not only they, but all require it, as we have seen, more or less. We are living in a world where the powers of darkness are allowed to have their time: we are dwelling in flesh, which has not of itself eyes to see God, and is naturally at enmity with his law: we feel and see through a body over which the tempter has prevailed, and may prevail again, until it be entirely subjected to Christ as its master. And nothing can be taken out of his hands. Being thus blind, thus poor, shall a man allow himself to become blinder still, poorer still? And every one that does not daily place himself where his Saviour shall go by, that is, on the ground of the means and ordinances of his Church, holding communion with Him by prayer, strengthening himself by resolutions made in prayer, fortifying himself against his besetting sin, preparing himself ever for the especial duty of his station; he surely is in peril of greater blindness still. And he who makes not use of the blessed direction which he has received; of placing himself in the presence of Christ his Saviour, and receiving from his hands the daily increasing

riches of his grace, surely must grow poorer. And here lies the peril of carelessness. The blinder men become in spiritual things, the less they feel that blindness, the less they feel the need of a Saviour to remove it. Indeed, they come at last to that pass, that they had rather not have it removed at all, since their conscience tells them that then they would see Christ indeed, but not on the seat of his mercy, but on the throne of his judgment. They turn away therefore from every road by which Christ cometh; they will not read his word, they will not seek his Spirit, they will not observe his ordinances, they will not keep his commandments.

And if we may judge from the manner in which that word, those ordinances, those commandments, are too frequently regarded, how wide, and how greatly does blindness of the spiritual heart and understanding prevail! If a great man was expected to pass along the road, you well know what crowds would gather from all the neighbouring towns, villages, and houses, to see him pass. What a long expectant gaze would there be all along the visible line of road for his coming; how patiently would they wait under sun or rain, sitting or standing, and enquire of every one that came up, "Is he at hand?" And when he came, what admiration would there be of his equipage, of his company, and all his worldly ensigns and trappings of

earthly rank and dignity. But every day Christ takes his round through his Church, through well-known roads, every one of which is directed by Scripture, suggested by the Spirit, every one of which has been pointed out again and again by the word of his ministry, and the experience of his servants, if not publicly set before a man. Who has not been told the way of Him that is the way? Who knows not where to find Him, if he will but seek? Who knows not that a heart truly believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to love Him, and keep his commandments, sets the man at once upon that blessed way?

And now, where are the crowds upon that way, where is the eager expectation, where is the earnest enquiry, where is the fervent admiration? And yet the King of Glory passes by, the Healer of blindness is there, the Dispenser of every good gift to man is there; yea, the Raiser from the dead, and the Redeemer to everlasting life is there. What! shall there be so few to see Him, that you may count them? Shall so few have the spirit of the blind Bartimæus? Of the millions of beggars that need the bounty of the Lord of Salvation, will so few come and beg by the highway? Alas! many will not confess themselves to be in the condition of beggars; and some, even of such as know better, are ashamed to beg, and some are even afraid. But if they would but look

sincerely into their hearts, and lift them up in earnest prayer unto the Lord, then they would discover their blindness, and would run to meet the Saviour on his way, with the cry, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" and He would meet them with the words, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

We ought to judge of the quantity of spiritual light which we put to account, by the sense which we have of the darkness which remains. If that sense be one of grief, of shame, at being found partners with the powers of darkness in any degree, and of an earnest desire for more light, until the whole spirit shall be light, even as the body is full of light from a perfect sight; if there be an aspiration after the light of the world to come, and an eager putting to account its earnest in the light of the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the light and life of man,—then at all events we are increasing in our quantity of spiritual light. But if, on the contrary, a man shall have no sense of the darkness which abides in him, and instead of seeking the light as the revealer of the secrets of his heart, that he might know them, and deal with them accordingly, in the presence of God, the Searcher of all hearts, he hates it, and runs away from it, as a criminal from his accuser; if, instead of confessing his darkness, he shall call his darkness light, and his blindness sight, and do that

which is good in his own eyes, and neglect God's service, nor care to obey his commandments, to use his ordinances, to yield Him public worship and honour, with continual private thanksgiving and praise, then is that man's darkness increasing at a fearful rate. Bartimæus, blind as he was, could find the road along which Christ was expected. But that man has become too blind even to find his way. Bartimæus was glad to hear of Christ. That man dislikes to be told of Him. Oh, how pitiable is his state! and the more so, the less he pities himself.

Let not any one give himself up to that indifference about these matters by which this world possesses the hearts of men, and turns them away from such thoughts. What blind man that ever received sight again, was ever indifferent about it? Was he not, on the contrary, like Bartimæus, most earnest and persevering in his application to the remedy? Why then should it be otherwise in spiritual things? There also we must be earnest. A way has been opened. We must put ourselves on that way, by the manifold means which the blessing of God hath bestowed on every one of us in various ways, and on all with sufficiency. The Opener of our eyes has been proclaimed to us, as to be found on that way. We must raise the cry of the prayer of the heart and understanding, which from holy living have

learned the desire of living more holy still, and say from their fulness, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Then shall come fresh comfort, and a renewed summons to the heavenly presence; and from that presence shall come more light still. Such is the progress of the children of light: thus they rejoice in the light, thus they are prepared for the light and life to come—everlasting.

SERMON XIX.

HEAVENLY TREASURE.

(*Ash Wednesday.*)

MATT. vi. 21.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

A TREASURE is that which is not only precious in our eyes for a time, but thought so very precious and desirable, that we lay it up in store against future need and occasion, and look to it as our mainstay of comfort, help, and enjoyment. Different people place it in different things. Some in those whom they dearly love, some in riches. But in general, riches are the treasure which men lay up for themselves in some shape or other; for riches promise to procure a man every thing of this world but love, and even the appearance of that. Do not then these words answer to our experience? do we not well know, that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also, with its hopes and fears, with its affections and desires? What

else will a man seriously think of, but of that which he makes it the business of his life to gain and maintain? Drive his mind off from it if you can, it will be at longest for a few moments, after which he will return to it more eager than ever; and his heart will be now here, now there, now up, now down, according as his treasure may lie. The heart of the merchant is on the sea in his ships, and trembles at every blackness of the sky, and howling of wind; the treasure of the capitalist is in the money-market, and his heart rises and sinks with prices; the treasure of the man of pleasure is in some delight, for which he is making all possible provision, and his heart is on the tenter-hooks of fear of disappointment. All the children of this world have their treasure, the darling of their affections, in it, and, with all their care and watchfulness, they are continually losing it. The sea swallows up the ships of the merchant, the fire devours his warehouses, unexpected events and turns ruin the capitalist, sickness disables the man of pleasure, and all that can keep their treasure at all, must part with it at their death; and how soon that may be, who of them knows? So that let a man place his treasure where he will in this world, whether by land or by water, in profit or in pleasure, all is uncertain and unsafe, and his heart has no rest, but is continually disquieted

within him. Even the pleasure of enjoyment is accompanied with the fear of losing it.

Where then shall a man lay up his treasure that it shall be safe, that he shall be sure to find it when he wants it? Not on earth, says our Lord, but in heaven; and, therefore, our hearts must be in heaven. There are no robbers, no moth, no rust; and that treasure is eternal life. All must allow that this is the only real treasure. Its riches can never fail, its pleasures can never run out. How strange then that so few should care to lay it up, that so many should never seriously have it in hope before their eyes. All other things that are thought valuable have a place in the affections of the heart; why not this, the most valuable of all? All things that we reckon precious upon earth are laid up carefully in store; why not this precious thing in heaven?

Eternal life is indeed a treasure: do you wish to know its value? then try to count, if you can, the value of the precious blood of the Son of God, who purchased it for us. Would you estimate the joy and delight which it has in store? then try to estimate, if you can, the sorrow and pain of the sufferings through which the Redeemer bought it for us. Would you come to some knowledge of the glory and exaltation which it will bring? then try to estimate, if you can, the depth of the shame and

humiliation through which the Saviour went to procure it for us. Would you consider the certainty of obtaining it? what can be so certain as the word of God, which has promised it, and assured all that seek that they shall find? Would you try to reckon the safety and security of it, when once obtained? then try to reckon the stedfastness of the throne of God in the heavens, which cannot be shaken; try to set a boundary to the eternity for which it shall endure; try to measure the stretch and strength of the right hand of Almighty God, which made and sustains all things? Would you understand its fulness? then try to ascertain the perfection of the merits of the Son of God, in the sight of the Father; try to search the depth of the riches of the gifts of the Holy Spirit of God. Was there ever any other such treasure offered to man? Is it not the only real treasure? And are not all other treasures, when set by its side, as miserable in appearance as a drop of water by the seaside; as a candle in the face of the sun; as the sparkling of a jewel, when all the stars of heaven are shining and blazing forth? What would a man have if he be not satisfied with this? But you know the story of the bird which preferred the grain of wheat to the rich jewel that fell in its way. Are not too many men like this bird? Do they not continually prefer the meat, the drink, the clothing, which, after all, make up the whole furniture of every trea-

sure upon earth, to the spiritual and heavenly qualities of the treasure of eternal life?

See how men lay up treasures upon earth, and succeed in making them large and rich. First of all, they set their whole heart upon getting them. By day and by night they have them in hope and imagination before their eyes, and grow in love with them more and more. Day after day, as they labour on, they perceive that their store grows more and more; the mite becomes a sum, the purse becomes a bag, the rood of land becomes an estate of many acres. Thus the man is encouraged to go on, adding sum to sum, estate to estate, and go as far as he will, he is never satisfied; as long as a pound remains to be got, or an acre to be obtained, he will go on. His heart can think of nothing else, can feel about nothing else, and at last can understand nothing else, so utterly engrossed has it become in this earthly occupation. Now for one who thus seeks the failing treasures of this mortal life, how many are there, who, with the same zeal and eagerness, seek the unfailing treasures of the life to come? In how many do you see the fixed and unalterable purpose of the heart, the unceasing labour of the hands, the unsatisfied desire of the mind? In how many is eternal life the thought possessing the whole heart, letting nothing else come in to occupy it, by day and by night? How many put the whole delight of

their lives, all the comfort and satisfaction of their souls, in the earnests in hand which God gives of the fulness of the wages of eternal life to all that truly labour to earn them? The treasure is confessedly in heaven; is their heart there also? Surely it should be, if it be seeking that heavenly treasure with any thing like the earnestness with which it seeks earthly treasure. And it should go on from gift to gift, from grace to grace, laying up more and more continually. Day after day it should have the assurance of having added something to the treasure in heaven, and this very assurance should fix it faster and closer there. When a man has overcome a temptation, through faith in the redeeming power of Christ, has he not added a jewel to the crown of glory which is in store? When he has suffered in patience through faith in the sufferings of Christ, has he not added a hymn to the store of the songs of his eternal joy? When he has done good to the brethren in the name of Christ who died for him, has he not increased the store of the heavenly riches which await him? When he has with all his heart performed one commandment of Christ in the love of Him, has he not added to the wages of faithful service which have been promised him? Thus his heart and his treasure, being in the same place, grow together; the heart in hope, the treasure in cer-

tainty; and in no other way can heavenly treasures be sought or found.

But what enjoyment can there be in heaven for a man who has never had his heart there? Surely no one can enjoy a thing in which he has never taken any pleasure. Just the contrary; it is a positive annoyance, if not insult to him, when it is offered him as a pleasure. How then can men think of heaven as a place of enjoyment for them, who have never taken any delight in those types and earnests of it which God gives upon earth? How, for example, shall any one enjoy the holy rest, the sacred quiet of the courts of heaven, who has never kept with his heart his Sabbath upon earth? How shall he enjoy the company of angels in heaven, who never had any taste for the company of the faithful servants of God upon earth? How shall he enjoy the general assembly of the blessed in praise and thanksgiving, before the presence of God in heaven, who took no pleasure in joining his brethren in public worship upon earth? How shall he raise the song of praise and glory there, who never delighted in it here? Heaven could be no heaven to him, if by heaven we mean, as I suppose we all do, a place of everlasting enjoyment, where Christ is present with his people, face to face in his glory. He would surely be more fitted with a place where these things are not.

Do not such considerations as these show us how necessary it is to attend to the instruction of our hearts, that they may in time know and love the things which belong unto their eternal peace, and not prefer earth, and even hell, to heaven, and death to life? Our heart has not naturally a taste for heaven, for it is naturally corrupt. It has to learn, and form this. And thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that He has given us a teacher in Him, that our hearts may be turned from a vain and sinful world, to the holy and everlasting joys of the world to come. Heaven has been opened to the view of our hearts in his Gospel; the Holy Spirit has come down from heaven to put into them good desires, so that they may value the treasures which have been laid up for men in Christ our Saviour. Thus both the treasure has been provided, and the means of seeking and finding it have been supplied. Our hearts then must be in heaven, while our bodies are yet upon earth. There they must have entered in with their affections, and have both become used to the sights and to the company, to the words and to the works which are there, and must have loved them, and found that it is good to be there. There they must have entered through a death unto sin together with Christ crucified, that they may look upon Him, and love Him glorified, and desire never to be separated from his love.

There they must have entered through the new birth unto righteousness, being risen together with Christ, that they may live for ever together with Him. There they must have entered, by setting their affections on things above, even as Christ hath gone up on high, leading death and hell captive, that they may sit together with Him for ever in heavenly places. Thus the heart must have been with its treasure, and thus the man who hath laid it up will find it ready for him in all its fulness of spiritual and heavenly riches on that day, when Christ shall return in his glory to take unto Him his peculiar people, who have been zealous of good works, and discharged a faithful stewardship. Then their bodies shall defy the worm, corruption, and all adversaries, as their treasure shall be proof against the moth, corruption, and the robber. And they shall, in an eternity of joy, experience the blessedness of the promise of their Lord, who said, that where He was there they should be also.

SERMON XX.

THE WALK OF FAITH.

2 Cor. v. 7.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."

St. Paul is laying down the difference of our present and future states in the body. The present being one in which the children of God groan, being burdened with sinful flesh. The future being one to which they look forward for being clothed with incorruption and immortality [1], anxiously waiting the day of adoption, when the sons of God shall be openly declared, and there shall be the redemption and deliverance of the body from the corruption of the flesh [2]. In the latter state they will be bodily present with the Lord. In the former they are necessarily bodily absent from Him, sitting as He is at the right hand of God in heaven. And therefore, while in the former they will have communication with Him perfectly and imme-

[1] Cor. xv. 53. [2] Rom. viii. 23.

diately by sight, and see Him face to face[3]: in the latter they can commune with Him only through faith, which presents Him to them mediately, as an object seen imperfectly, by means of the reflection of a glass.

And one of these states leads to the other. We must prepare for the state of sight by a state of faith. What then is this state of faith—is a question which we are deeply concerned to understand.

Faith has been defined by St. Paul himself as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen[4]." That is, it is a certain assurance, which puts as it were into our hands the substance of those things which we should otherwise have but in unsubstantial hope. It is a certain conviction, which affords us evidence of the existence of things which we cannot see. Behold then our Guide, our fiery pillar through the night of the wilderness of our present state in the body. Thus the children of God are enabled to enjoy his presence—thus to walk with Him. And it is evident that by this quality they must have their very first communion with Him, and that therefore their justification necessarily depends upon it.

But what a new, what a glorious world, does it open to our eyes; how does it refresh them, pained as they are with the miserable sights of

[3] 1 Cor. xiii. 12. [4] Heb. xi. 1.

this world, and wipe every tear away. It carries us forward in thankful adoration, in joyful resignation, in cheerful obedience, from the look back upon the day when the worlds were framed by the word of God, to the look forward to the day when the elements of the world shall be dissolved, and the Creator shall appear as the Judge. It has made a new creature of the man. What wonder if he find "old things put away, and all things become new"[5]; "If he look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"[6]? And then for its nearer objects, such as are neither past, nor yet to come, but still going on, behold Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, exalted from the humiliation of the cross, and sitting at the right hand of God as Son of man, and offering continually the prayer of intercession for his people. Such, in brief, are the objects of faith. Now let us turn to the walk which is ordered according to them.

In walking through this outer world of the body, do we not keep its objects carefully in sight? can we go right or straight without looking at that which lies before us? Make we not all use of the sun, all advantage of the direction of roads, and put to account continually our knowledge of the places, and experience of the ways? It is not so very different in the walk by

[5] 2 Cor. v. 17. [6] 2 Pet. iii. 13.

faith in the Spirit. We must have the presence of the objects of faith in our heart; we must have the spiritual world before us; we must go by its light; we must be guided by its directions; we must be familiar with its places, times, and seasons. We are on the road to eternal life; the road is lighted up by the heavenly light which comes from Him that is the light and the sun of righteousness: on it we follow the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is marked out by his cross and his grave; and before us is ever the glorious appearance of the Author and Finisher of our faith, sitting on the throne of his glory. But language cannot describe these things, though they are clear and familiar to all who have begun the walk by faith. They have experienced that Christ dwells in all his fulness in the heart by faith; that He brings with Him all knowledge, and beyond all that they could think, proves himself to be to them "the way, the truth, and the life." They can resign themselves to his will, and commit themselves to his keeping, when to the world without it seems folly to hope, and madness not to despair.

But how are we to bring such a heavenly presence to abide in our hearts? There are ordained means and plain rules.

(1.) We must go to the book of Scripture. It contains the wonderful dealings of God with men; it sets forth the Saviour in his earthly

sojourn and in his heavenly character before us; it unveils to our eyes the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Here we find the objects of faith; here they shine to us in brightness and number as the stars in heaven. Here is example, here is precept; here are threatenings, here are promises; here are the doings of God, open and in secret; here is light to the understanding, and life to the heart of man. This book must therefore be our study, it is the road-book to the walk by faith. It supplies all the knowledge that we require, beginning with the fall of man in Adam, and ending in his redemption through Jesus Christ. And yet this is a book which, when I have asked for it, I have seen before now sought with difficulty, and drawn out at last from a dark and dusty corner, or from beneath a heap of books of the world's idle tales. So can men neglect the work of their own salvation. Repeated application to this book of Holy Scripture supplies more and more objects for faith, and makes more clear and lasting such as have been already gained. At every perusal they are found in more regular order, and felt in more immediate bearing.

(2.) But we all know how little reading and thinking will avail, unless it go along with feeling and doing. We know that they become, even in the best of books and subjects, as much poison as wholesome food to the heart. We

must therefore accompany the word of God with wholesome practice, unless we would be hypocrites. And this practice is twofold. It is social, and it is personal. By social practice, we understand the good and faithful stewardship of the benefits of the public ordinances and privileges of God's Church. For example, the regular attendance upon the place and time of public confession, praise, and thanksgiving, which is offered up in the name of Jesus Christ: and the partaking of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, according to his express commandment. These are means of grace, open to all, common to every member of Christ's body. Whosoever neglects them, declares that he has no faith in Him; and whosoever applies them with a truly believing, penitent, and thankful heart, finds strength added to his faith. Were their spiritual benefits less than they are, no true Christian could neglectfully treat them, earnest as he is after the very least of God's gifts; scrupulous as he is not to let the smallest blessing from heaven fall to the ground unused; watchful as he is of every opportunity which comes from the hand of God, and therefore how attentive to such as have their appointed places and regulated seasons!

(3.) And to these public ordinances must be added that holy, blameless conversation of life, which brings a harvest of good to the child of the family of God, by doing good to others; by

example of good works, by exhibitions of faith, in patience of well-doing, in perseverance of hope, by deeds of brotherly love. Faith without works is dead. It is by works that it grows, as every thing that has life does. And the child of God, placed in a large and various family of brethren, all having different wants, bodily and spiritual, and in every difference of position around him, has constant exercise supplied to his faith, and by that exercise must maintain his spiritual health, and carry on the work of his salvation.

(4.) But at the very foundation of this social practice is our personal practice. We must have set our own house in order before we can benefit our neighbours, or effectually execute any public duty. And this practice is concerned with two grand points—those of watchfulness and prayer. By watchfulness we provide for laying hold of every opportunity of good which God's grace affords, and making fresh opportunities out of those opportunities, so that God's grace should be to us a lively and growing thing, as every heavenly thing is: and we also provide against those occasions of evil which the evil spirit is continually suggesting. And not having strength for these things of ourselves, we must be instant and fervent in prayer, and thus put ourselves, and keep ourselves, in constant communion with "the Author of every good and perfect gift:" thus, like

rivers flowing from their well-head, we bring the waters of life to refresh the dry and thirsty land of our own barren exertions, and enable it to bring forth fruit abundantly in due season.

Such, in brief, is the walk of faith. Let me now again remind you, that it is preparatory to a walk by sight in the world to come. There is laid up a precious treasure of glorious objects, which shall surround the glorified bodies of the saints of God. And here we must learn to prize it. There shall be the Son of man on the throne of his everlasting kingdom. Here we must begin our knowledge of Him; here we must learn our service to Him. There shall be faith as to those things which God must still hide from the eye of all his creatures, however exalted their state, and by which faith they hang in dependence on Him, and maintain their station. For such we must prepare here, by faith in the things which are hidden from our mortal sight. There shall be peace, for which we must prepare by establishing in our own hearts peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, being justified by faith. There shall be joy, for which we must fit ourselves by the foretaste afforded us by the joy of believing. There shall be entire eternal communion and brotherhood, for which we must qualify ourselves by the faithful execution of the duties of Christian communion and brotherhood in the Church of God on earth. Such will be the walk by sight,

when things of which we now obtain but faint glimpses, as through a glass, shall be revealed to it in all their immensity of extent, in all their brightness of glory. Shall not our walk here be such as may lead to this unimaginable blessedness?

SERMON XXI.

MAN'S TRANSFORMATION.

MARK ix. 2, 3.

"And he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them."

IT is not my intention to show what part this transfiguration, or change of our Lord's figure to the eyes of his three disciples, had in the dispensation of the new covenant. This is more a matter of curiosity for divines, than of concern to us in our daily practice of life. I shall therefore endeavour to exhibit to you its bearings on the latter point, and prove to you how necessary it is that we should keep this glorious appearance continually before our eyes, saying to our hearts, with a clearer knowledge than Peter, "It is good for us to be here."

Our Lord is to us the way, giving us an example in all things, both that we should follow

in his footsteps, and also enjoy in Him the earnest and first-fruits of his promises. Among his promises are our resurrection from the dead, even as He rose: and moreover, our glorification in a body fashioned like unto his glorious body [1], which He took on Him both now on the mount and after at his resurrection. But then this life in the mortal body is a state of preparation for putting on that immortal body; and we shall be found naked, and not clothed with it, if we do not qualify ourselves for it. And therefore we must follow his footsteps, so that as He died for sin, we should die unto sin; as He rose for our justification, so we should rise to newness of life; as He was transfigured, or transformed, so we must be "transformed from the world by the renewing of our mind [2]," having the Lord of glory continually before us, as our example, as our help, as our hope, and thus with open face beholding that glory as in a glass: not through the veil of types and shadows, nor yet indeed face to face, but having it reflected to us from his word, from his sacraments, from his promises, from his Holy Spirit. Thus we are, day by day, through closer contemplation, through nearer imitation, to be changed in our souls and spirits into the same image of the Son of God [3]; day after day advancing from one state of glory to another, as we grow more

[1] Phil. iii. 21. [2] Rom. xii. 2. [3] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

perfect in conformity to the bright example which has been set before us. Such is the practical application of our Lord's transfiguration. It admonishes us of a change which we are to undergo in this life. We must be conformed in our souls and spirits, and the use of our bodies, to the image of the Son of God [4], while we are here, so that we may be conformed to the body of his glory hereafter [5].

O, then, what a stake have we in our treatment of this body! If we be indeed sons of God; if we be indeed heirs of the kingdom of heaven; if we be conscious of means of grace; if we lean upon the hope of glory; if we look, as we continually should, from Christ crucified to Christ glorified, can we yield its members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin? God forbid! Our profession, which we claim from our baptism, and attest from our title of Christian, is to yield ourselves unto God, as those that are "alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God [6]." We must keep this vessel of our body in all holiness, even on its own account, and not only because it ministers to soul and spirit. In this very same body we are to meet the Lord, and upon the use of this body depends the condition in which we shall meet Him; whether it

[4] Rom. viii. 29. [5] Phil. iii. 21. [6] Rom. vi. 13.

shall be one of glory, or of contempt. We must serve Him, and do his work in it now, if we hope to serve Him in it in his heavenly and everlasting kingdom hereafter.

But how can we serve Him in it, if we employ it in the service of a different and contrary master? And how can we keep it pure and undefiled as his peculiar vessel, if we be not watchful against the advances of that master, who has so many natural friends in its house? For has not Satan fast friends in its corrupt affections and sinful passions? And is not that evil spirit continually trying to gain full possession of it, and be its master through them? Is he not continually appealing to its want of meat and drink, to its love of enjoyment, and saying, "Be idle, be drunken, be impure, be intemperate in all things? Eat and drink, for to-morrow thou diest?" But, meanwhile, is not Christ crying out to us, "Touch not, taste not, handle not the things of ungodliness. Remember that your bodies have been dedicated to me, as vessels of my service, as temples of my Spirit. Then use them as mine; be dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness. Love me as your Creator and Redeemer. Fear me, as Him that 'is able at the last day to destroy both body and soul in hell[7].' And hear my Apostle, who tells all most distinctly, that neither 'fornica-

[7] Matt. x. 28.

tors, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God *.' "

To which of these two, Christ or Satan, shall a man listen? Surely no one doubts in understanding for one moment. But when it comes to doing, what holding back is there, what inconsistency, yea, what blind wilfulness! And even when a man, duly impressed with these awful considerations on the use of his body, has determined upon a change—has even begun a change—how often does it happen that he is led back again, through want of watchfulness, and remissness in applying the spiritual means, into his former state of recklessness of living, and practical denial of the Saviour of body, soul, and spirit?

Look at the man who has clouded his reason, palsied his limbs, by strong drink. See the disgusting, degrading spectacle of his helplessness; hear the revilings, the folly, the blasphemings of his imperfect speech. Can such a one entertain any serious thoughts about the body that shall be? Can such a one be living in the hope of being glorified together with Jesus Christ; of being made like unto Him, transfigured into a spiritual body, and shining

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

like the sun? Can he care for the heavenly knowledge, the holy service which shall be the privilege of the sons of God? Alas! what place but one is he fit for? to what place, but that one, that dreadful prison for bodies of contempt, will he be assigned on the day of judgment, unless he shall have turned away from his besetting sin in deep repentance?

See another man. His body is seen any where else but in this place, where is the assembling of the body of Christ in one body, one spirit, to give glory and worship to our great Head, with one mind, with one mouth; to stand before that throne where sits the Son of man at the right hand of God, in that body which suffered and rose again. What can he care about the most precious privilege of the body that shall be; the standing face to face before his Saviour in a like body, amid the company of his saints in glorified bodies? What can he care for that place which is assigned for the general assembly of Christ's people in bodies delivered from the burden of the flesh, and uttering praise and thanksgiving with one spirit for ever and ever? How can he be fit for such a place? How can he possibly be admitted into it without unfeigned sorrow and repentance?

In the same manner we may go on and deal with sins less open and gross than these, and show how inconsistent they all are with any hope of a joyful resurrection in a glorified

body; and how necessary is the bath of tears of repentance to all that commit them, that so their sins may be washed out for the sake of Jesus Christ, and they may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless!

But a repentance not yet begun is a fearful uncertainty. How mad to trust to such an event, against which there are so many chances —the hopes of eternity! Will not part of the shame, which will fill the hearts of the wicked, and make them loathe themselves, be the shame of having carelessly thrown away such a prize as the Son of God hath offered? If a man had lost the certainty of a vast estate coming to him, by such a slip as rising too late in the morning, or sitting too long over his meal, would he be able to hold up his head afterwards? Would he not be almost ready to kill himself, through sorrow and vexation for such heedlessness? Why then should the inheritance of a heavenly and spiritual body, living for ever in the glorious company of the Son of God, be thrown away with the like heedlessness? How deep will be the sense of contempt; how sharp and loud the voice of self-accusation, in all that shall have let the precious prize go by! Especially too, because then, when they are in eternity, the whole of this mortal life shall appear but as the twinkling of an eye; the whole of it as having formed one grand but short opportunity, which never can

come into their hands again. O, how should we husband its days and hours! From what bitter pangs of eternal remorse will the putting to good account a few fleeting years deliver us!

Now, therefore, while yet it is the season, let us do the things which concern the body that shall be. Our present body is the seed of the body to come. It may be as unlike it, as the small black shapeless seed of the tulip is to that beautiful flower. Still it is the seed, and according as we sow it, we shall reap. If it go into the ground laden with sin, ignorant of God's service, the mere corrupt remains of what has been expended in folly, in idleness, in unprofitableness, in rebellion against the commandments of God, in neglect of duties, in abuse of privileges, then it will come out of it a vile and noxious weed, which shall be cast into the everlasting fire.

But if the sinner shall turn away from his sin, and by a change of heart and life conform to the example of Christ; if he will take his body out of the service of sin, and conformity to the world, and use it in the service of righteousness; if he will thus, in this world, be transformed into the likeness of the body of Christ, in all temperance, in all purity, in all deeds of holy living; if thus, by unfeigned repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, he shall have become indeed the new man, then he will have

"sown to the Spirit[8];" and of the Spirit he shall, through the Lord and Giver of life, reap life everlasting. In a body, no longer of flesh and blood (which cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven), in a spiritual body, compared with the glory and powers of which the most beautiful body in the flesh is corruption, the strongest and most healthy is the impotence of death; he shall stand on the everlasting mount of heaven, transfigured from this mortal body in the raiment of a body shining as the sun, white as no fuller on earth can white, and gathered into the company of the sons of God, such as Moses and Elias, and beholding the Son of God in eternal glory face to face, shall say with the joyful cry of the song of the full sense of thankful blessedness, "Master, it is good for us to be here."

[8] Gal. vi. 8.

SERMON XXII.

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT.

(Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

"THEY rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit [1]," was the complaint made of old against the people whom God had chosen, and led by the hand of his servant Moses. St. Paul is requiring of the Ephesians, and through them of us also, that the people whom God hath chosen in Christ, whom He leads by the hand of Christ, should not exhibit such an example; the more disgraceful in us, of course, inasmuch as the Spirit hath been poured forth so much more abundantly, according to the prophecy of Joel [2]; so that the heart may be able with a fuller light to comprehend the preciousness of his crowning mercy in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

[1] Isa. lxiii. 10. [2] Joel ii. 28, 29.

In both places, both of that Prophet and of this Apostle, the members of the Church of God are admonished that they are in possession of certain special privileges, which they must not abuse, and are placed in a certain station, from which they must beware of falling. We, for instance, who are now assembled here, are met together under especial commandments and promises of God made to a peculiar and spiritual people, we presume to have received spiritual grace, and are seeking an increase to it. And indeed, to say no more, is it not a spiritual grace to know that we have a Saviour from our sins, to be assured that repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall make us inheritors of the kingdom of heaven? Is it no spiritual grace to have been planted in his Church, and made partakers of all its manifold gifts and blessings, if indeed we will partake? Whose fault is it if we be not rich in the things of the Spirit? Our profession is that of spiritual kings, robed with righteousness, crowned with eternal life, endowed with heavenly treasures by the Holy Spirit of truth. Whose fault is it if we be found beggars and destitute?

Is it not plain, then, that if we live as though we had not these benefits, we are grieving the Holy Spirit of God? Is it not grief to a parent, who has put himself to great expense and trouble in setting up a son for life, to see all wasted and spent through neglect and idleness?

to find, after all his endeavours, his child returned upon his hands a beggar? So it is grief to the Holy Spirit of God, when they who have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and have thus been admitted into the Church of the sons of God, been put into possession of its present inheritance of spiritual wealth and privileges, and brought up to the hope of its future inheritance of eternal life, when they are insensible of the blessedness of their situation; consider not what has been done for them, abuse their knowledge of a Saviour, take no good heed to his voice in their consciences, make no full use of his means of grace; and thus, going on from neglect to neglect, waste in the idleness of a life of this world, the precious outlay by which He had prepared them for the life everlasting of the world to come.

But we cannot properly understand all this, without some more particular application. To this, therefore, I will now proceed. Who, alas! has not before now felt a reluctance and dislike to do that which he knows that he ought to do? He cannot find the heart and spirit for it. He had rather do something else instead. It puts him to inconvenience; it perhaps even concerns his peace with a neighbour, and may bring him ill-will, calumny, and trouble. Yet all the while he knows that he ought to do it. He feigns excuses to himself; he endeavours to see if he

cannot do something like it, something which is not so disagreeable, instead of it. He looks about to see if he cannot find out some other thing which shall seem to require his service at the same time in another place. In short, all the shifts and byways of escape from it are tried, but still he cannot shake off the burden of conscience; he knows that he ought to do it. Now this knowledge, like all other knowledge of good, comes to the Christian from the Holy Spirit of truth; and in thus pressing it upon his conscience against his corrupt affections, the Holy Spirit is pleading with him, warning him, as a father does his child. And if at last he goes against this knowledge, then he grieves the Holy Spirit of God, refusing his counsel, setting at nought his earnest and repeated admonition.

Again, who has not felt tempted to do that which he should not do? He finds it pleasant in a carnal sense, or he finds it profitable in a worldly view. Still he knows that he ought not to do it. He tries, however, to varnish it over with various excuses, and hide its foulness of appearance of sin. He endeavours to persuade himself, or allows others to persuade him, that he is too strict, too full of scruples, and so is making the thing look worse than it is. Perhaps he looks around among his neighbours, and says to himself, such an one would do it, if he were in my place; or, such an one would

not care for my doing it. Still, after going through all the round of excuses and arguments which the deceitfulness of his own heart and the malicious arts of the devil can invent, he knows that he ought not to do it. The Holy Spirit of truth, who told him so in the beginning, persists in telling him so to the end. If therefore he shall do it, he will then indeed grieve the Holy Spirit of God, who has so carefully instructed him, so mercifully interfered with him.

All sin, therefore, in the Christian, whether it be that of omitting duties, or that of committing transgressions, is a grieving of the Holy Spirit of God; as is, indeed, evident also from the mention of particular sins which goes before the words of the text. And now see what a dangerous thing is the lightest sin against knowledge, when considered in this true light of a grieving of the Holy Spirit.

The text proceeds to tell the Christian, that by the same Holy Spirit he is sealed unto the day of redemption.

When a deed, or instrument, is confirmed by a man, he sets his seal to it, and thereby engages himself to complete all that is promised in it. Now the Christian, the new man in Jesus Christ, is the deed of Almighty God. In him, in his heart and understanding, are written the promises of everlasting life in Jesus Christ our Lord. And on him He has set the seal of his

Holy Spirit, in spiritual help, comfort, and illumination, to assure him of these promises by an earnest. And therefore, in the first chapter of this Epistle (ver. 13), St. Paul tells the Ephesians, that "after they had believed in Christ, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

When men solemnly assert their property in a thing, they stamp it with their seal. So God asserts his property in the Christian, and denotes his peculiar care of him to all eternity, by sealing him with the mark of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus St. Paul tells the Corinthians[3], that God had sealed them, and given them the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts.

When men set apart from common use, and lay up in careful store, vessels containing any rare or precious things, (as rich perfumes, costly liquors,) they set a seal upon them. The Christian is a vessel of sanctification, election, and honour, containing "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ[4]," though this treasure be in earthen vessels. And God accordingly acknowledges him as precious, by sealing him with his Holy Spirit.

Of this seal we have all received the outward and visible print in our baptism. And the question with us is, have we it abiding on our souls

[3] 2 Cor. i. 22. [4] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

and spirits? Do we there exhibit tokens of the Holy Spirit of God? Is there his mark to be seen, so that none can mistake us as belonging to any one else than God Almighty? Are we living so that it can be said of us, There is a man of God? Not so, assuredly, if we be careless, unwatchful, inattentive to his ordinances, neglectful of his commandments.

And yet the possession of this mark is every thing to us. The text tells us, that the sealing is for the day of redemption. That is, on the great day of redemption of our bodies from corruption and death, all that shall then be distinguished by this seal shall be acknowledged as God's precious property, and shall be laid up for eternity in his heavenly treasure-house, saved from the judgment which shall then come upon the earth, and destroy all such as have not this mark upon them. Of this awful scene we have a lively representation in the seventh chapter of Revelation, where the destroying angels are bidden to suspend their dreadful work, until the servants of God shall have been sealed in their foreheads.

On that day, therefore, if it is to be a day of salvation, we must have this seal visible upon us. And how shall it be visible then, if it be not visible now? The mark of the water of baptism has long passed away from our bodies, and no one in his senses would rest all his hopes upon that. But where is the inward

mark, assured by the answer of a good conscience towards God? This is that which is required to entitle us to the inheritance of eternal life; by this we must be stamped for salvation. And therefore our business is to have a good conscience, void of offence toward God and toward man, with faith unfeigned. And that can be obtained only by a faithful stewardship of the many and merciful means with which God has supplied us for the work of salvation, through the gift of his Holy Spirit. A man must be able to answer that he is diligently using them, not carelessly abusing them. He must be bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, filled with the fruits of righteousness, and not yielding the seed of the unprofitable and hurtful weeds of forgetfulness of God, and devotion to the sinful service of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Only think, therefore, what a high calling we have received. O, shall we make Almighty God, who hath sealed us with his Holy Spirit, guilty of the folly of the Pharisees, who sealed a stone, when they thought to make sure the sepulchre of our Lord? Shall we be as hard, as insensible as that stone? Shall not the glorious promises, which He hath sealed with his Spirit, awake the sleeper? Shall not the dreadful threats which have come from his mouth, alarm and rouse him? Is it a light thing to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, wilfully to break and

cast off his seal by the unbelief of careless living? Can there be greater madness of folly, than to lose the mark which alone shall avail to save us on the day of redemption? Who shall tell the shame and despair of him, who shall on that day be found with no seal on his forehead, to save him from the hands that shall hurl him into the pit? And what tongue shall describe the blessedness of him, who, having that seal, shall be forthwith admitted into the company which is arrayed in white robes and bears palms in its hands, and stands before the throne of God in adoration and worship for ever?

SERMON XXIII.

THE COURSE OF SIN.

MARK vi. 26.

"And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes who sat with him, he would not reject her."

IT would not be easy to find a more remarkable example of the rapid course of deadly sin than that which is recorded here. It began with Herod's admiration of a woman's dancing (which in the East has always been of a character unfit for pure eyes), and ended in his putting to death a prophet of God, in murdering the forerunner of Christ. What wonder if he afterwards sought the life of Christ Himself, and joined Pilate and his soldiers in treating Him with cruel mockery? It will be very instructive to mark the steps of this dreadful course. Intoxicated with his sinful admiration, Herod ventured, on so improper an occasion, in such improper company, in such an improper state of mind, to take the name of the living

God in an oath, by which he promised her any thing that should be asked of him. It was not likely that Satan would neglect so open opportunity for his work; so he set the mother to persuade the daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist. Herod had no great scruple about keeping oaths, as indeed we may gather from the manner in which he made them. And, therefore, had he feared God only, he would most probably have broken it here. But his guests were witnesses to it, and he found himself compelled, by his fear of man, to keep it. So did Satan entangle him. Profligate, unprincipled, and godless as he was, he had yet some scruples about murdering an innocent man, especially one who was regarded as a prophet by the people, and was evidently held in much reverence by himself. But his fatal oath, taken in a moment of levity, bound him down to the yoke of sin, and he found himself driven, without means of resistance, to the end of the course of his sin.

Careless as men are of taking the Lord's name in vain, they do not often bind themselves by rash promises in that holy name, and therefore we need not dwell longer on the example of Herod in this particular point. It will be more to our purpose to consider the whole transaction as a warning, to bear in mind how ready Satan is, when we have once started, to carry us the whole length of a sin. Herod's

sin began in a very common place for the beginning of deadly sin. It began in the riot and levity of sensual amusement. How continually does a course of sin begin with a man's being in a place where he ought not to be! He may say to himself, I will not join in any of the improper doings there. Then why does he go? Why does he give countenance to them by his presence? But Satan tempts him by whetting his curiosity, and when he has brought him to the forbidden ground, half his work of temptation is done. He has tempted him to enter into his trap, and now a single step further will shut it upon him, and make him prisoner in body and soul. Does not every day's news bring us some account of horrible sins, which have had their beginning in the sinner going whither he ought not to have gone? And how many have occasion to rue the being found elsewhere than in the house of God on this day! How have they wished in the evening for the comparative clean hand and heart with which they rose in the morning! and how have they bewailed that forgetfulness of God, which took them far away from his house, and so set them upon forbidden ground, and where the snare and trap of the devil was laid ready for them!

The fact is, that Satan only wants the occasion of a beginning of a sin from us; however slight that may be, though we may have removed from the sure ground of a clear and un-

defiled conscience by a step of a hair's breadth, he has gained all that he wants. He has removed us from the ground where we could watch and pray; he has put the fear of God, and love of Christ, out of our hearts; he has withdrawn us from the presence of God, tempted us to come forth from the hiding-place of his pavilion, and the secret of his tabernacle; and to come down from the rock on which we had been set up through his merciful protection; and then we are completely in his power. Our strength is gone, and we have left behind us our armour of light; we are exposed, without defence, to his fiery darts, and that, too, on ground which the Holy Spirit refuses to visit and be with us. Is it wonderful that Satan should be so successful? Do not his agents well understand this? Do not those persons, alas, too common! who take a diabolical delight in leading their neighbours into sin, always begin their persuasion with tempting them in what seems at first sight a slight matter, but yet by weakening the power of conscience, ends in the serious matter of a deep and deadly sin? How many, very many, can trace the beginning of their calamitous course of alienation from Christ, to being enticed to frequent haunts and places which they knew were improper for them, and to neglect attendance upon the place which was proper for them! There they have become entangled with a sin

which they ought to have expected on such ground, but would not, and they find themselves too weak to contend with it, and to burst the bonds. How can it be otherwise, when, having foregone the protection of God's Holy Spirit, they are left to the utter helplessness of the natural man?

They may be exceeding sorry when they find themselves in this miserable situation. So was Herod. They may feel reluctant to go on, remorse may prick their hearts, their steps may falter for a moment: such was the case with Herod; but go on they must. Herod was afraid of his guests, and so are they of their companions. They have engaged with them, and cannot endure to be reproached with breach of promise, with treachery, with cowardice, with not knowing their own minds. They are in dread of their raillery and mockery, if of nothing worse. And having forgotten God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, they are abandoned entirely to the fatal influence of their fear of man. So, though it may be with a heavy heart, they go on, and take a still deeper plunge into the gulf of sin.

But does the heaviness and unwillingness of their hearts lessen their sin? Did it lessen Herod's? Surely it is rather an aggravation of their sin, because they are sinning against light, quenching the lamp of conscience, resisting the striving of the Spirit within them, which tells

them that they are sowing to a harvest of guilt and shame. It were better not to have tasted the heavenly gift than to abuse it: better not to have tasted the good word of God, than to rebel against it: better not to have tasted the powers of the world to come, than to put them under the mire of the powers of this world: better not to have known Christ, than to crucify Him afresh. Vain, therefore, will it be to say, "I was exceeding sorry; but in the circumstances I could not help myself." What business had the person who makes such an excuse to put himself into the circumstances? He was free to avoid them. Why then, knowing too their danger, did he not? He had his choice; he might have heard the prophetic voice of upbraiding conscience saying in his heart, "If the Lord be God, follow Him. But if man, then follow him." And he chose to follow man, and must now abide the consequences, which, in common faithfulness of duty to God, he might have foreseen.

What were the feelings of Herod when he beheld his sin face to face, in all the reality of its most horrible shape, as the head of the murdered prophet was brought upon the charger into the room, amidst the sounds (oh, horrible scene!) of the viols and merriment of the dance? Even that most wicked son of a most wicked father, that most wicked brother of most wicked brothers, must have trembled for the

moment. Perhaps he would gladly have given unto the half of his kingdom to have undone the dreadful deed. But there it glared upon him in the face, without remedy, beyond reparation. He was, no doubt, stung with remorse, or he would have been a more unfeeling monster than his previous exceeding sorrow shows him to have been. But did he repent? Alas! turn over a few leaves, and you find him setting at nought and mocking the Son of God, and delivering Him into the hands of Pilate, the Gentile. From the murder of a prophet of God, he went on to consent to the murder of the Son of God.

Who, then, that knowingly begins a sin, can tell where it will end? Most men begin it with a notion that they can stop in its course when they like, and that they will have the opportunity and the will to repent. But how miserably they are mistaken in both those notions, they hardly need even Herod's example to warn them. We have seen at length already, how utterly unable they are to stop; and a very few considerations will show how little reason they have to look forward to a genuine repentance. They forget, in the first instance, the nature of sin, which is to harden the heart, to sear the conscience, and to blind the understanding. All these effects are the very contrary to repentance. And they may, therefore, (since they have put God out of the question,)

as well expect corn to come out of thistle-seed as repentance out of wilful sin. Do they think to reap the contrary of that which they sow? So absurd is it to join the resolution of repentance with the commission of sin. It is the absurdity of putting God at the end, with Satan for the beginning; of thinking to serve two contrary masters, and after having worked for one, to go and receive wages from the other.

On the whole, the text gives us a solemn warning upon the nature of sin. It is not always barefaced and audacious, even when most heinous. The sinner may even set about his dreadful taskwork which Satan has set him with exceeding sorrow, as did Herod. But this does not avail to abate its violence, or to lessen their guilt. It must be resisted in the beginning; we must not suffer ourselves to be led to the ground where we ought to suspect that its snares and traps are set. We must beware of places, we must avoid company, which are likely to minister to the least purpose of ungodliness. Our strength lies in the knowledge of our weakness, and we must pray that we enter not into temptation. The man who enters the place where it lies, with the notion that he is strong enough to resist it, is overcome already. Do not the stupendous means which God hath prepared for men against sin sufficiently declare its danger and power? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might de-

stroy the works of the devil [1]." And moreover, He sent his Holy Spirit into the world, to enable men to fight a good fight against it. Where these means are not accepted, there sin is indeed triumphant, and is steadily working out his end of everlasting death to the soul and body of man.

Let, then, the blessed means be accepted. Let Christ be received into the heart with all sincerity. Let prayer go up continually before the throne in his name, for the light and comfort of his Holy Spirit, that we may see the spiritual dangers by which we are surrounded, and also see, and have confidence in, the helps which He affords. That we may have strength to resist, and comfort to sustain us in this pilgrimage through this wilderness of temptation, trial, and trouble, and may, finally, being made conquerors over sin, the world, and the devil, arrive at the promised land of everlasting rest from sin and all its miseries.

[1] 1 John iii. 8.

SERMON XXIV.

SEEKING CHRIST.

The Epiphany.

MATT. ii. 9.

"And, lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was."

THERE is much room for thought upon these wise men, who, though heathens, obeyed the leading of Almighty God, and following the star through a long and perilous journey, sought and found the Christ; and, pouring out their treasures before Him, presented the first-fruits of the offerings of the Gentile world. We should make them our example, and follow them as our leaders in seeking and finding Christ, and in rendering to Him the offering of our spirits, souls, and bodies. But where is our star, where is the journey, where is the house in which Christ is to be found?

We need not go far for a star, and a star in the East too. For surely the sun rising in

the East awakens the Christian to his daily work, and directs him by its motion through the heavens throughout its course. And what is the grand work of the day to him, the work to which every other only ministers, the spiritual work to which all bodily work is the servant, as the body is to the spirit? Is it not seeking Christ, that we may come nearer to Him still, seeking to find Him in the house of his Almighty Father, at the end of our journey of this life, and to meet his glorious body with our glorified body, and there to offer Him the tribute of everlasting praise and thanksgiving. And meanwhile, at the end of every day's journey, to enjoy an earnest of this in a nearer and closer spiritual communion with Him, having sought Him through the day by the diligent use of all our gifts, and by the watchful following of all his commandments.

With the sun awaking our body, the day-star should also arise in our hearts, to lead our spirits as the other directs our bodies. And this day-star is the bright and clear knowledge which the Christian has received, and which at once supplies and nourishes his faith, and regulates his works. Is there one among us who has not this in sufficient quantity to lead him aright, if he will use it? Is there one among us who can say that he has not had Christ crucified set before him; and that he does not understand well and clearly, that he must be dead

unto sin, and alive unto righteousness? Can he, who has been brought up in the Belief, say, that he does not know well what to believe; and having been taught the Commandments, that he knows not what to do, and what not to do? All know well enough; there is no want of sufficient knowledge. The want is that of will to do the things which are according to knowledge.

Thus then every day we should rise with our star in the East. We should awake from sleep, not only in body, but in spirit. We have every morning a journey before us, and by the end of the day our spirits must be found in the house where the Son of God dwells with his heavenly Father, pouring forth the day's increase of the spiritual treasures of our heart, in praise and thanksgiving for the blessings and mercies of the day. We have a journey before us, and perhaps a perilous one, perhaps a long one, perhaps through foreign countries, as those wise men had; for who can tell, when he rises from his bed, what his body rises to, and still less, what his spirit awakes to. Satan may have some dangerous trial for it; he may purpose to lead it into long and fearful wanderings; it may have to visit strange and distant places, through the many and manifold thoughts of heaven, and earth, and hell, into which the mind may go. It is a journey for which we must make heedful provision, and we must take

good care that we appear not empty-handed at the end of it in the house of our King.

Does any one say, "What means this daily seeking of Christ, if we shall have already found Him?" But then it must be remembered, that the finding Christ, while we are yet in the body, is but a figure. He is in his body in heaven, and so quite out of our reach as to any proper sense of finding Him. But we are said to have found Christ, when we have had our first conscious spiritual communication with Him. Now such finding has its degrees. It may become clearer, closer, more lively, more joyful. And this it is that we are to be seeking from the moment that the sun in the East has given us his light again, and the darkness of senseless sleep having been removed from our hearts, the day-star of knowledge has risen there again. We are to seek, that we may find Christ at the end of the day, with a larger and more precious offering in our hands, from the putting to full account the further opportunities and means which the additional day has given us at his hands; that our treasures of his heavenly gifts and graces being increased by the day's good stewardship, we may open them before Him, and present unto Him gifts, the gold and myrrh of works of faith, and hope, and love; and the frankincense of the prayer of confession, praise, and blessing. To such a journey the Christian rises every day of his

life; and if he sanctify every journey of this world with prayer for protection through its danger, and success to its object, how much more shall he open the day with prayer, when this journey of the world to come is set before him! O! is not every day a most serious and important day indeed to the Christian? Before night he must have brought fresh treasure to offer in his house to the King of kings. If any one of us were to rise any day with the expectation of seeing our sovereign, how busy in thought and in deed should we rise! And if we were to present ourselves individually in the royal presence, to be received individually, what anxious preparation would there be! And if we were expected to come with a present, with what zeal, with what industry, with what joyful and yet fearful care should we labour that it might be acceptable! Can we not do as much for the King of kings? Should we not do more, infinitely more, for Him who is King of our bodies, souls, and spirits; who has created them by his Almighty power, redeemed them through his wonderful love, who has prepared a place for them in his royal house, that they may be his, and in his company for ever and ever? Such a King is Christ; such a presence we are, as Christians, to be seeking every day of our lives.

As sure as the sun rises to our eyes, the day-star must also at the same time rise in our

hearts, and with that as our guide, we must be seeking Christ through the day. The sun directs our body, his motions assign to us the hours of work, the hours of prayer, and measure to us the time for all things. But it is the day-star of the knowledge of Jesus Christ in the heart, that leads us on our spiritual way towards Christ, and his glorious presence. This is the light to our paths; by this we see and handle the work of our salvation; by this we pick our way amid the darkness of this world, and keep the straight path of the commandments of Him who loves us, and calls upon us to love Him. Has it risen to-day, or is the heart yet asleep? O! awake every one that sleepeth. The day is far spent, the night is at hand. We must work while yet it be day. Have we considered this morning the journey which is before us? Have we risen strong, and of good courage in the Lord to it? Have we been anxious to seek the face of the Lord, and find Him by the end of the day? And as the day has advanced, have we, as men on a journey—on a most important business, even of life and death—taken care to lose no time in loitering, to waste no strength on other things, but to press continually onward, with our face set forward, according to the guidance of the day-star in our heart and conscience? Are we as men in earnest upon their journey? Are the thoughts of our hearts set upon its end, which is everlasting life? Are

we as eager for spiritual refreshment on the way, even for the meat and drink which perisheth not, even the good word of God, and grace, with increase of grace, as men on a journey in the body are for meat and drink to the body? Are we anxious to examine whether we have advanced forward on our Christian course, as they are to count the milestones? Are we as glad to be in the communion of saints, through meekness, through charity, through brotherly love, and exercise of true Christian fellowship, as they are to secure or meet with amusing company? Do we take as much delight in admiring the works of Almighty God in our creation, preservation, and, above all, our redemption in Christ Jesus, as they do in admiring the works of man upon the road, the towns, and the buildings? Are we as eager to put to all account all the means of grace, as they are to secure the means of conveyance? Is our heart full of the thoughts of meeting with our God and Saviour, and with the blessed family of heaven, with angels and spirits of just men made perfect, as theirs is of the thoughts of meeting with the persons whom they have appointed to meet, and with dear kindred, and with beloved friends? Are we watchful against temptation to sin, careful of opportunities of good; on the look out of preparation for the coming of the day of the Lord, as they are heedful against accidents, punctual

to time, diligent in making all provision for the business on which they are going? Are we impatient at all delay, as they are? Are we eager for the end of our journey, as they are? Are we, in short, come as Christians thus far in the progress of the day? Thus we must question ourselves; thus watchful must we be over our goings; thus jealous for the glory of the Lord, whose presence we profess to seek, and find in it the fulness of joy. When the day is spent and past, who can call it back again? It is gone into eternity, and nothing remains of it on earth but its name in the calendar. We can walk no more, we can work no more, by its light. Are we then at the end of our proposed journey? Have we found Christ? Has the setting sun brought us again to his door? Does the star in our hearts stand over where He is, that was the young Child in the manger, but is now the King on the throne of his glory? Are our hands full of the works of a living faith, loaded with the gifts of increase of grace? Are our hearts full of good treasure in improved holiness of thought, heightened by purity of affection? Can we stand in his presence? Is Christ before us in all his royal Majesty, in all the sweetness of his love, in all the shining of his truth? And are we before Him in all the devotion of subjects, in all the faithfulness of stewards, in all the love of the redeemed, in all the hope of the believer? Do we find our-

selves in his presence, by seeing and recognizing all its glorious ensigns, as exhibited in our heart? Do we see his cross of shame in sincere repentance for the shortcomings of the day? Do we see his shepherd's staff in our support and guidance through the day? Do we see his royal throne and sceptre in the putting down of evil affections, and in the raising up of good through the day?

Then we have made good our day's journey as Christians. We have sought, and we have found. Our labour has been in the Lord, and it has not been in vain in the Lord. Then we have gained the end of another stage of that journey which leads the Christian onward through the perilous dark ways of this world to the everlasting house, where the Son of God dwells with the Father in eternal glory, and has prepared a place for his people, and is waiting to receive them. O then, no star, within or without our hearts, shall be needed to point out that house, the brightness of whose glory shall quench the light of the sun, and moon, and stars! It shall be seen and known with joy as its home by the Christian's eyes, in the moment that it shall open again at the startling sound of the last trump.

O then, shall we not all, every day of our lives, be found upon this journey of seeking Christ? If this be its end, shall we be frightened from it by any thing which savours of

hardship, struggle, and endeavour? Does not a joyful end make the most rugged journey joyful? And, on the contrary, could all the most delightful scenes, all the most comfortable refreshment, all the most easy carriage, minister any pleasure to the man who was on the road to the place of his execution? So little real enjoyment is there on the road of the sinner; for it leads to death and judgment, however it may be strown with flowers, and resound with notes of merriment. But the road of the true Christian is eternal life and blessedness, and not all the sounds of the sorrow of this world can drown the notes of heavenly joy which are heard along it.

SERMON XXV.

SPIRITUAL LIFE.

(*Septuagesima Sunday.*)

GEN. i. 2.

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

THIS is the first mention of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, and observe how early it is. He is the Lord and Giver of life both to body and to soul and to spirit; and therefore this world could not have its beginning without Him. Nothing could move without Him, nothing could breathe without Him; but all was in the shapelessness of nothingness, all in the stillness of death. The earth had no form. There was no light; but all was void and wrapt in darkness. But the life-giving Spirit brooded (for that is the proper sense of the word "moved" here) upon the face of the waters of the vast and dark deep in which all things were hidden, as a bird upon her eggs, which she warms and

hatches into life; and then all things came forth in their proper shape and order, one after another; and last of all, as in a procession the great personage always comes last, came man. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he, who had been the moment before but the dust of the earth, then became a living soul. The Spirit of God breathed into him a much more excellent spirit of life, even of life everlasting, and the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and might; the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. So excellently was he endowed by the Spirit of God. But in an evil hour he grieved this Spirit of God, and thenceforward the nature of man, as a spiritual being, underwent a sad change. His heart became dead and dark; its thoughts, as far as God was concerned (and all our real concerns are centered in Him), were without form and void. As a heap of dust called into life and motion, like the rest of the things which creep, and walk, and fly upon the face of the earth, he was living in the body; but as a creature born to serve God, and give Him continual glory, he was dead in the spirit.

But for the sake of his dear Son Jesus Christ, who offered Himself from the beginning to be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, God sent his life-giving and quickening Spirit again into the world, again to exercise his power as the Lord and

Giver of life. He breathed life again into him who was dead in trespasses and sins, and man was born again. A new understanding was given unto him, that he might be able to comprehend the mystery of God's will; new affections were given unto him, that he might love the Lord God with all his heart, and soul, and mind. A new will was given unto him, that he might serve the Lord God with all faithfulness and obedience. A new hope was given unto him, that he might look forth beyond this world of sinful misery, into the bliss and glory of the world to come. In short, he was made a new creature, in all things a child of God, and every thing looked new to him in turn. In all he saw the finger, and the hand, and the arm of God. And thus the heavens were new, the earth was new, behold all things were new. And by the communion opened anew with God, through the access in Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit, he was placed in Paradise again, in a spiritual Paradise, amid waters and trees of spiritual life, refreshing his soul with heavenly meat and heavenly drink.

Such has been the work of the Spirit of God, who, in the beginning, moved upon the face of the waters. And his work, in giving a new birth unto man into eternal life, having been done for the sake of the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ, is of course done upon those only who accept Jesus Christ as a Saviour, through

faith in Him. Now we, were it only by our very act of meeting here, where we meet in Christ's name, profess this faith, and boast of the enlightening grace of his Spirit. But is this merely an outward profession, and of the lips only, or is it also the inward confession of our hearts? is it only in the form, and in the flesh, or also in the truth and in the spirit? for God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. These are the questions which the earnest and watchful Christian puts to himself; these he is desirous of answering with satisfaction to himself; on these grounds he is jealous with himself for the honour and glory of God, and for his own salvation to eternal life.

Is then the Holy Spirit of God felt actually moving within us? Has He called into life the dead things of our hearts, so that they are not without the form of godliness, and void of heavenly understanding, but are quickened into newness of life; illumined with the light of his word; fashioned into holy meditations, pure words, good works; being indeed good to sight, and touch, and taste, as becometh the fruits of the Spirit. Not that we are to look within only; for then, seeing but a part, we shall deceive ourselves; nor to look without only, for then we shall see but a part, and deceive ourselves. We must look without and within. Fruit is the proof of full and perfect life in a tree; so are works of true spiritual life in a man. But

whether they be good or not, depends upon the secret of the heart. Therefore we must examine both the hand that does and the heart that thinks, before we can say with confidence that we have the Holy Spirit of God calling to life the dead things within us; filling the void of our hearts, and working with his life-giving energy throughout the frame of the inner man.

Newness of life is our profession, wrought in our hearts, and manifested in our works, through the operation of the Holy Spirit. But this cannot consist with carelessness of living, and still less with sinful living. It is indeed so clear and direct a contradiction, that it seems absurd to notice it. But it is notorious, that men continually blind themselves to it, and will not see the inconsistency. They grieve the Holy Spirit of God by not ceasing to defile the heart in which they profess to have Him an indweller, and not abstaining from courses which, so far from being under his rule and guidance, are under the direction of the evil spirit, that is ever tempting men unto sin. This is the way in which the Spirit is quenched in the end. We must, therefore, take heed to ourselves how we treat the Holy Spirit of God, who will not always strive with men, and suffer Himself to be vexed and provoked by his wilful rebelliousness, or careless indifference. And the more so, because it is commonly not at once, but by little and little, that His blessed influ-

ence is lost, and sanctifying grace withdrawn. Few are they who become open and shameless sinners at once. The last and deepest sin can very often be traced up through various steps and stages to one which not only the sinner himself, but even his neighbours made light of. And why? Because they would not avail themselves of the Spirit; they would not put themselves under the very first operation of his heavenly office, which is to give them discernment between good and evil. For He is the caller into life of the deadness of the heart; and as his operation, at the very beginning of the world, divided the confused elements one from another, brought light into the place of darkness, substance into the place of emptiness, and life into that which cannot be called dead only because it never was alive; so the very outset of his operation in our hearts is to divide the things of darkness from the things of light, the things of everlasting death from the things of everlasting life; to quicken the dull conscience, to stir the benumbed affections, so that we may at once know God's will, and acknowledge it, and do it. We must, therefore, pay attention to his workings; we must continually inquire his meaning. We must accustom ourselves to be jealous and scrupulous about those things which we have been accustomed to think indifferent, and amongst which we may find that the Holy Spirit puts a wide difference, a gulf which there

is no passing across. We profess, by the operation of the Spirit, to be new creatures; and as all new creatures do, we require continual information and instruction where all is strange. Look to the new creature that comes by natural and fleshly birth into this world. Do you not see the young child giving all his attention to things which to you seem most trifling? Do you not see how he looks at every thing, how he handles every thing? He is learning the fashion of the world into which he has been born; and you see how careful he is to find out the differences of things, that he may know which to take and which to refuse, when they come in his way again. And does he not require often to be told, Do not taste that, do not touch that, because they are hurtful? Even so is it between us and the Spirit. If we be indeed spiritual, then we are brought, as newborn babes, into the spiritual world, and need direction in it. Then the least trifle becomes a serious matter, and we have a most important lesson to learn in ascertaining the differences of things, and knowing what to take, and what to refuse. And the Holy Spirit is our instructor, and tells us to forsake this, and cling to that; to handle this, and not touch that; to taste this, and abstain from that. And this is a work of time, yea, the work of our lives, for the whole life of the man of God is taken up with his education for heaven; and as he ad-

vances in it, the more perfect he will be, and the more desirous also to be more perfect still.

Thus you see how necessary to our Christian well-being is a habit of watchfulness. You perceive that we cannot begin without it, for how else are we to attend to the voice of the Spirit? How else are we to receive his directions as to what is good and what is bad for us? How else are we to use his means, and make the best of his opportunities? And how can all this possibly be done amidst all that careless and uninquiring ease with which too many are content to regard their state in this world, as if they had nothing serious to learn, nothing dangerous to provide against; though they have to learn the way to heaven, and to provide against the way to hell? How often does a man reply to the warning of a prudent friend, "Why, I see no harm in it!" And is not this the reply which our heart is naturally inclined to return to the secret warnings of the all-discerning Spirit? Thus the misgiving which He has prompted, thus the reluctance which He has stirred up, are put down. But it is in instantly obeying these, against the persuasions and delusion of the world within and without us, that our lesson lies. Can we learn to read without learning the letters, and dividing a word into syllables; without this, can we tell one word from another? And yet syllables and letters are in themselves of no

meaning to us. So it is in those things in which our uninquiring heart sees no harm. They have no meaning, forsooth, either one way or another; but must they not be attended to before we can come to the practice of the word of God? assuredly they must. The Spirit insists upon their being learnt before He will teach us further. Does it not sometimes happen to a man that he does not feel comfortable about something that he is doing, or has been led to do? Here is a warning to look seriously and sincerely at the thing; to inquire of the Holy Spirit; to lay it before God in prayer; to compare it with his written word; and when all this has been done, has he not found that not only something was not right, but that all was wrong? and has he not thanked God in the name of Jesus Christ, and blessed his Holy Spirit, having found how he has been delivered from a dangerous delusion, and saved from a most perilous course of temptation?

Such is the spirit of watchfulness required from all that would be under the blessed guidance of the Lord and Giver of life, of the Spirit of God, which at the beginning moved upon the face of the waters, and is even at this day moving upon the face of the great deep of the human heart, quickening its things into life and light. We must watch, as being quickened and awakened from sleep; we must watch, as liable every moment to have some order or

warning from our Guide; and we must watch, as having an enemy, who tries continually to blind our eyes and deafen our ears to all that the Spirit shows or tells. And we must watch unto the end, that when He cometh, our Lord may find us watching.

SERMON XXVI.

SPIRITUAL COMPREHENSION.

(Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

EPHESIANS iii. 18, 19.

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

THERE is here presented to us the view which is enjoyed by the saints, or holy servants of the Lord. And it grows clearer and wider as they advance on their Christian course, from faith through the various degrees of increasing love, until they come to the fulness of the comprehension of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and experience the fulness of his love in the full apprehension of the love of Christ, whom He gave to the world, that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

He likens this Christian to a man who is beholding some immense and magnificent building. Such an one is, at first, bewildered by its

size, and distracted by its many and minute parts. The height is painful to his eye, the depth makes him dizzy, the length and the breadth seem without bounds. Pillars and buttresses, windows and doors, seem a heap of immense confusion. But in time he begins to apprehend the plan of the building, and as this becomes more and more clear, he sees the relations and bearing of the various parts; he estimates the height and the depth, and the length and the breadth, and ends in comprehending the whole building in his eye and mind, in all its fulness and harmony of proportion.

And have not all of us a building to look at, and that not of the hands of men, but of God? Is not the edifice of God's work of might and mercy, glory and love, before the eyes of the Christian, if he will but look? O! to what a spectacle indeed, to what a view of goodness and majesty, have we been admitted through the inestimable privilege of our profession. And shall we not use this privilege? Shall we not look upon such excellence? Only gaze for a while on that which is revealed to the eye of faith, and see how good and glorious the work of the Lord is.

Look upward, survey the height of his work. Is your eye faint at such stretching, confused at such extent? Yet have patience and faith, look upward and upward still. Even as your

natural eye, in surveying the building of this outward world, looking upward, first sees the strength of the hills, which is his, then mounts to the clouds, whence He sheds his rain; and thence to his sun, which He commands to give heat and light; and the moon and the stars, which He hath set to ordain our times and seasons; and ends with gathering into one glance all this fulness of prospect, while the heart comprehends it all with the fulness of the feelings of admiration and love: so the spiritual eye of faith stretches upward from spectacle to spectacle of wisdom and mercy. It sees man formed in the image of God—it sees him renewed by his Holy Spirit—it sees him endowed with excellent gifts, adorned with spiritual wisdom and heavenly understanding, created unto everlasting life and glory—it sees the golden opportunities, the precious communications, the celestial privileges which are continually descending from the treasure-house of heaven upon him, and passing upwards through these and many and manifold degrees of examples of majesty and love—it sees the heaven of heavens opened, and Jesus Christ, who died for sin, sitting at the right hand of God in glory, interceding for his people, ministering to his flock, preparing mansions in his Father's house for his servants, and making all things ready against the day of his appearance in glory to put the crown to his work of redemption, and

lead his saints to their inheritance of light, to the fulness of their blessedness and glory. Has not the heart which hath looked up and sought the things above, and begun this view in faith, ended in the fulness of adoring love?

And now, from this look upward to the works of God's mercy, let us look downward to the spectacle of his judgments. Is the head dizzy at the bottomless depth? is the heart sick at the dreadful sight? First, there is the grave, with all its horrible corruption. There lies man stretched out in his penalty of death, degraded from his likeness to the image of God, and mingled with the senseless dust of the earth. All his thoughts have perished. He has lost all his earthly treasure. There he lies, laid naked as he came into the world, the food of the worm, the companion of senseless mould. O what a fall from the life and light of Paradise! Who shall tell it? Does it not make the head giddy to think of it, and the heart faint to see it? But have faith, and see there also, even in the depth of that grave, the uncorrupted body of Jesus Christ, who was delivered for our offences: see, amidst the depth of darkness, that bright example of the redeeming love of Christ. Is not thy heart filling with love? Yet look deeper still, yes! deeper still than that. Look down lower and lower, even to the very lowest bottom that thy thoughts can reach under the guidance of thy faith. And now what does thine eye be-

hold? Is it not the place of departed spirits, where man is expecting his summons to judgment, and is every moment in terror of being cast down lower still, into the depths of the bottomless pit? Is thy heart sick? Yet have faith, and see there Jesus Christ, who hath descended into hell, that the spirits of his faithful should not abide there, but being re-united to body, even glorified body, should dwell together with Him for evermore in heavenly places, more beautiful than Paradise, as heaven is more beautiful than earth. And now, has not thy heart, in penetrating down to this depth of judgment, and finding mercy there, gone from faith to the sense of the fulness of love?

And now look through the length and the breadth of this glorious edifice of redeeming love, see his Church extending its line of saints, the regenerate sons of God, from Adam down to the last Christian at the last day, over all regions of the earth, to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, all victorious over this world of sinful misery—all rejoicing in the Lord amid the very depth of its troubles—all bringing forth, amid its barren wilderness, the joyous fruits of the Spirit—all, amidst its loathsomeness, enjoying the fragrance of the sweet-smelling sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross; amid its nakedness, clothed with his righteousness; amid its hunger and thirst, fed with his bread from heaven, and given to drink

from his Spirit; amid its prison enjoying heavenly liberty, and in peace and joy of spirit, possessing the earnest of everlasting peace and joy in heaven. And at the end of this long line, see the form of their blessed Redeemer re-appearing in glory. And now, has not thy heart gone from faith, and seen the length and the breadth, and felt the fulness of the love of Christ?

Such is the view which we are called to comprehend with all saints, and to estimate its breadth and length, and depth and height, and so come to the knowledge of the love of Christ, which passeth all the knowledge of this world. Thus, as we go on, we shall see all the parts of the vast edifice of the redeeming work of God in all their harmony of love and proportion of wisdom; and the more we study them, the more we shall see their excellence, the more we shall experience the grace of God, which comes upon the exercise of our spiritual gifts and faculties; we shall advance in wisdom of truth, we shall grow in fervency of love, we shall receive from the unstinted outpouring of his heavenly store, and be filled with all the fulness of God.

O that such a view were indeed before all eyes! It is an earnest of the sight of heaven. And they who take no pleasure in the earnest, will surely find no pleasure in the fulfilment. Heaven is indeed a very different place from

that which too many make it to themselves to be. Most men, it is to be feared, think of it chiefly as the place where they will be delivered from their peculiar trouble, and have never seriously thought about it, until that trouble has beset them. The man who has fallen into the pains of sickness, then thinks of the place where sickness can never be. The man who has lost the riches of this world, then thinks of the riches of heaven, which never can fail him. The man who has lost the beloved object of his heart, then thinks of being in company again in heaven, no more to be parted. Even the man who has lost a limb of his body, or feature of his face, consoles himself with the thought of being restored to everlasting perfection in heaven. Thus heaven is often considered only as the place where our bodily wants will be satisfied. Ask of almost nine persons out of ten their notion of heaven, and you will find it end after all in this. And when they seek comfort from its prospect, it is in the thought of being delivered from some particular affliction, or admitted to some particular enjoyment, and not in the contemplation which sees the whole state of fallen man, in body, soul, and spirit, restored to more than its original perfection and blessedness. And thus the Church of Christ, which is its earnest, and, as it were, ante-chamber, is considered much more in the light of a hospital, to relieve some present pressing uneasi-

ness, than as a school to educate men in the discipline of body, soul, and spirit, for eternal life. What numbers, if they can but be assured that they shall obtain forgiveness of sin, will never trouble themselves to improve in spiritual knowledge. How many will even despise such knowledge, as tending to make them lose sight of their particular blessing.

Not such, however, is the teaching of this text. We are called to a comprehensive view indeed. We are called to join all the saints in one mind, in one understanding, which shall embrace the whole work of redemption, in all its length and breadth, in all its height and depth. Here we must employ our heart continually in going on and reviewing mercy after mercy, as given not to ourselves only, but unto all men. Thus the knowledge of the love of Christ must grow in our heart, and we must feel it increase from the first hearty thanksgiving for the forgiveness of sin, up to the last fervent adoration for the gift of glory. We must ever remember, that here we are in a state of education for heaven. And does not experience and common sense tell us, that he who will not attend to his lessons, will never be fit to fill the post for which his education is given him?

What signs then do we see of this education going on? I will not say in the world around. For there are few signs indeed of an education

going on for eternal life, but many and continual of one going on for eternal death; as many and continual examples which the forgetfulness of God, the breaking of his commandments, the neglect and profanation of his ordinances, can supply. But I say, in the heart within, what are the tokens there? Consider the end for which, if we be of the company of the saints, true Christians, real children of God, we must be striving. It is a state of knowledge and experience, in which we shall be filled with all the fulness of God. Where is the earnest of that fulness? Where is the day-star of that bright and perfect day of heavenly light? Where is that growing comprehension of the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the knowledge of the love of Christ to which we have been called?

The love of Christ is essential to our salvation. But how are we to love Him, if we will not learn in the first instance to know Him? And that knowledge, we are told, surpasses all the knowledge of this world. No one would expect to be led by the knowledge of the flowers of the field to the knowledge of the stars in the heaven. Still less has any worldly knowledge to do with the heavenly knowledge of the love of Christ. We must learn it by itself, and for itself. And as it comes but by degrees, no time should be lost. Have we, then, already past the knowledge of this poor transitory

world; have we gone beyond its narrow boundary; have we stood within the starting-place of that course which extends from the faith in Christ to the fulness of God? Have we started? are we running?

O, how frivolous! O, how vain, appear our highest and most valued earthly pursuits, when we look down at them from the height of these heavenly! Much more, how sinful, how hateful in the sight of God, how offensive to the glory of the name of his only-begotten Son, how grievous to his Holy Spirit, is the open neglect of his gifts, the rebellious defiance of his will, manifested in the daily course of those who live according to this world, and are content, as long as its corrupt law does not condemn them! And yet how many does even that law condemn! Alas! what blindness of the heart, what searing of the conscience, what perversion of the understanding is going on, and daily more and more disqualifying immortal beings for immortal happiness! How can a man be found learning the lessons of such company, and have the least desire to be one of that blessed company which joins heart and mind, soul and spirit, in the endeavour to comprehend what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that so they may be filled with all the fulness of God! They cannot. On the contrary, all we, as many as truly seek to be filled hereafter

with the fulness of God in his crowning gift of everlasting life, must grow in spiritual comprehension through the careful study of his word, the strict conformity to his example, and the diligent exercise of his grace, so that we may be filled with the earnest of that fulness here.

SERMON XXVII.

CHRISTIAN THANKFULNESS.

(*Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.*)

LUKE xvii. 15.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God."

ONE only out of ten turned back; one only out of ten had any thankfulness in his heart for so great and wonderful a blessing; one only out of ten glorified God, and thanked the Lord Jesus Christ. If any one of us had experienced such an extraordinary token of God's loving-kindness and mercy, should we have been among the nine? We hope not, we think not. And yet those nine were members of the Church of God; they had been used to be present at the public thanksgivings in the Temple; they must have been sufficiently instructed in the merciful dealings of Almighty God, to know what they ought to do. But whatever knowledge they had in their understandings, they had no proper feeling in their hearts. And is not this too common a case among us also? It will be no

use, in answer to the above question, to say, "I know better." The answer required is, "I do better." And to give such an answer with the confidence of a good conscience, and not of the boastfulness of self-ignorance, is not so easy a thing, or so likely to be done, as may be at first supposed. Perhaps this will appear as we proceed; and we may find that even among ourselves there is a much louder and more frequent cry for mercy to be given, than thanksgiving for mercy when it has been given.

Mercy is shown us, whether we cry for it or not, every day, and every hour of the day, and every moment of the hour. Considering our continual short-comings of obedience, every breath that we draw is a respite from the penalty of death; and so is a display of God's mercy and long-suffering towards us. And still more, every enjoyment of life, whether continued or added, comes from the continuance and addition of his mercy. We live by mercy; but do we think of such mercy? Do we take it to heart, and glorify and thank Him for it? If we do, then our life is one continued act of thanksgiving on our part, in answer to the continued act of mercy on his. And it bears a clear and never-failing testimony of praise, by a resolute dedication to his service. And this we should do, were we but the children of Adam.

But when we have also received the high calling of children of God in Jesus Christ

our Lord, when the cry of our hearts is for mercy, not only to the body in its daily preservation, but also to the soul and spirit, in their redemption to eternal life; and when this mercy is acting every moment in the application of the precious sacrifice of the cross to the forgiveness of our thoughts, and words, and deeds, in the sight of the Searcher of hearts, and in the continual mediation of our High Priest, at the right hand of the Father in heaven; and when every moment is bringing on so much nearer the fulfilment of his promise of everlasting life and glory, at the glorious re-appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, surely our thanks must show themselves forth, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by one uninterrupted course of devotion to the duties of our heavenly calling. Nor can we be truly thankful if we do less. If this immense sum of mercies be spent upon us one by one every moment, must we not, if we really care about them, want them every moment? Shall we not be very much short of our reckoning with our merciful and loving Giver, if we do not? And where is the truly thankful man that would willingly forget, that would not carefully remember, to the best of his power, every item of the benefit which he had received? How then shall we want them every moment, but by a life of continual waiting on the mercies of God, that we may observe their seasons and

their nature, and keep ourselves awake to the experience of their effects upon us; and accustom ourselves to see the outstretching of his arms and outspreading of his hands from heaven in every thing that we receive? So receiving in clear conscious experience, we shall pour forth again in a stream of sincere praise and thanksgiving.

See how the vessel which is filled continually with a stream pouring into it, pours it forth again by its overflow; if it do not so, we know that it is an unsound vessel, with one or more chinks and flaws. It is even so with us as vessels of the mercy of the Lord; its stream is pouring into us continually from its everlasting fountains of heavenly mercy; and if we give it not forth again, then we have let it slip through the flaws of neglect, the chinks of forgetfulness, the fractures of abuse. We are then broken cisterns, unfit for his service; we are no reservoirs to deal forth in love to man that which we have received from the love of God, in due season and proportionate measure; we are not living the active life of Christian thanksgiving; we are not glorifying God with a loud voice of praise, which may be heard not only by the ears, but in the hearts of our brethren; we have not sought Christ to thank Him, as did that Samaritan, in the presence of his Church; O no! then we are as the thankless nine, who were never found to return to give glory unto God.

Now, therefore, we are able to go into the question, whether the case of these nine lepers be an uncommon one in these days? and whether we ourselves need not at least as much warning from the condemnation which our Lord has passed upon them, as encouragement from the praise which He bestows upon the one who returned to give thanks?

Of course all must be put among them who are living in known disobedience to his commandments; all drunkards and indulgers of carnal desires, for instance. Also, all that are careless about attending the times and places especially appointed for meeting to glorify God in the presence of his Church. All Sabbath-breakers, for instance; all that absent themselves from this house on this day, under flimsy or no excuses, fonder of their own worldly ease and interest than of God's honour and glory. Also, all that do not apply the merciful gifts of God to his honour and glory, and the good of the brethren; all, for instance, that live in self-indulgence, and not in dedication to the Lord's service: the idler, the covetous, the selfish. Also, all that are not walking circumspectly, fearful of offence, and watchful upon the opportunities of God's goodness; all that are trusting in themselves more than God; all the careless, for instance, all the boastful, all the self-righteous. Alas! can we now say, "Where are the other nine?" Have we not

found them? How many remain when all that may be put upon this list are taken away? Does there remain one out of ten? Surely here is sufficient warning. How few can say, with the just confidence of a good conscience bearing them witness before God, that they would have been that one exception out of ten; that their liveliness of faith, their watchful application of God's opportunities, their careful stewardship of his good gifts, their habitual thanksgiving both of life and heart, their deep sense of the mercy of their salvation, their regular application of that sense to all their practice, that all these (and nothing less can) assure them that they would have been that one, yea, that only one! Many and many might have read this passage with a secret flattery of themselves, that they would not have done as did the nine. They could not, forsooth, have been so insensibly thankless. And yet they would, if they had not been as that one. And now, what reason have they for assuring themselves that they would have been as that one?

That there is no lack of occasions for turning back, and glorifying God, is proved, if by nothing else, by the continual cry for mercy that is sent up every day, from every place, to the throne of the Most High. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me," cries the sick man, with death and judgment staring him in the face. And how often, when raised up again, does he

remember to turn back from his former evil courses, and glorify God with the loud voice of the example of a reformed life? "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me," cries the man who is ready every moment to be overwhelmed in the waves of the sea. The Lord rebukes the waves. He is saved from destruction. And how often does such an one turn back from old untoward courses, to glorify God by the loud voice of the example of a new course? "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me," cries the man who is cast down into the dark depths of trouble of mind and affliction of soul. He is restored to the light of joy. Does he in that moment turn back, and with a loud voice of thanksgiving, sounding not only from his lips, but from every act of a holy life, glorify God? All we have been crying, in the humble and contrite strains of our Litany, "Lord, have mercy upon us." How many, alas! use them, who never turn back from an old habit of carelessness, and glorify God by that peculiar thanksgiving over bread and wine, which the Lord himself hath ordained, and plainly said to all, "Do this in remembrance of me!" O, there is no want of the cry for mercy! But where is the loud voice of glorifying God for that mercy?

Of one cry, and one only, can we be assured that it will be followed by the voice of glorification. And that is the cry of him that feels the foulness and danger of the disease of

the leprosy of sin. When a man sees how it defiles and corrupts the body, covering it with foul blemishes, from intemperance in meat and drink, and indulgence in sinful passion; when he sees how it renders the soul and spirit loathsome with plague spots, and blotches of corruption, in the sight of heaven and before God; when he sees how it infects every thing around him also, so that he can find nothing untainted by it; and that joy is corrupted by sorrow, pleasure by pain, good with evil, life with death; when he has come to the clear sight of all this sad disease of his fallen nature, and when having cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me," he has found mercy, and felt the health of salvation in a renewed mind; it is impossible for him to go away from his Saviour thankless for so great benefits. No! he will turn back indeed, he will cling to his blessed company, falling down in thankfulness at his feet, and glorifying God with the loud voice of adoration and blessing. Thus his faith hath made him whole. And thus he will await in joyful hope that glorious day, when the Lord shall put the crown to his work, and the leprosy of sin shall have become impossible to this body, glorified as it shall then be, and body, soul, and spirit, in spotless purity, in inseparable unity, shall dwell in the presence of the Lord for ever.

SERMON XXVIII.

CONCERN FOR SALVATION.

Acts xvi. 30.

"And he brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

The gaoler at Philippi, an ignorant heathen, put this question in a very different meaning from that in which he used it afterwards, when he had been instructed in the word of the Lord. The earthquake which had thrown open the doors and loosed the chains of the prison, made him fearful of the vengeance of the great God, whose servants Paul and Silas were, and whose hymn of praise he had manifestly answered with so tremendous a display of his power. He besought them to interfere for him, and tell him what he must do to be saved from the vengeance of their terrible Master. They took that opportunity of introducing the word of the Lord to him, and they preached it so effectually, that before the dawn of the light of this world

had returned, he and all his family were rejoicing in the light of the world to come, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he who had washed their stripes was washed with the water of baptism, and the prison-house of men became the Church of God. Then he understood indeed the full meaning of, "What shall I do to be saved?" he knew that the salvation to be sought was from eternal death to eternal life, and that it was to be found by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, as that Saviour from sin.

In this knowledge we have been instructed from our cradle: the answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" is among the most familiar things. But on that very account, it is not thought of so deeply as it should be. Men do not consider that the question is one of such wide extent, and of such continual application, that it needs to be asked not only daily, but many times a day. For we have all a great work set before us, the work of salvation, which is to be wrought out with all the fear and trembling which ever accompanies a work in which our welfare is deeply concerned. And in what can it be so deeply, as in that of salvation to everlasting life?

It would be well if we would take for this work an example of the watchfulness and industry with which we provide for the salvation of our bodies from the many and manifold accidents of this outer world. "What shall I

do to be saved?" is a question continually satisfied there, by doing the proper answer. And thus it may be answered twenty times in a day, when we have not taken more than ordinary care of ourselves. When a man takes meat or drink, is he not answering for the body, the question, "What must I do to be saved?" When he clothes against bad weather, is he not answering for the body, the question, "What must I do to be saved?" When he hastens out of the way of a carriage, is he not answering for the body, the question, "What must I do to be saved?" When he steps aside to avoid a dangerous scaffolding, is he not answering for the body, the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" When he handles a sharp-edged tool with care, is he not answering for the body, the question, "What must I do to be saved?" When he walks cautiously on the brink of rock or water, is he not answering for the body, the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Thus, in our care for the salvation of our mortal bodies, we are continually asking and answering this question. It is true that we are not aware, until we come to think attentively on the matter, of this asking and answering. And why so? Because the salvation of the body is such a matter of course, and every thing concerned with it so familiar, that we do things without knowing, and quite mechani-

cally. But we do assuredly put and answer this question over and over again to ourselves in the course of a day, as much as the most experienced reader spells in fact every syllable of every word, although practice has made this so quick and constant that you can hardly convince him of it.

So continually then are we asking, "What shall I do to be saved?" as to the concerns of our mortal part, the body. O that there were any thing like this care as to the concerns of our immortal parts, our souls and spirits! O that this question were but asked once, where that other is asked twenty times! Alas! has it not often happened that a man has never seriously asked this through the course of a long life? And yet every day should be to us a day of work of the salvation of our souls in soul and spirit. And as in every other work, the longer men delay, the more unwilling they are to begin; and the more careless they are, the more careless still they grow; "What shall I do to be saved?" should therefore be continually the question of our hearts.

But why ask this again and again, when we all know the answer? some one may say. True: we all know that the answer always has been, and ever will be, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." But the working out this belief in our thoughts, and words, and deeds, is the great business, the applying it to the ever-vary-

ing calls of every hour and every spot is our grand work of salvation.

By the light of this world we do the work of the salvation of our mortal bodies, and we work under the confidence, that the world will be the next moment the same that it is now, that is, that God will uphold the works of his creation, as He has ever hitherto done. But it is by the light of the world to come, by the spiritual beams which pour forth from the Sun of righteousness, that we have to do the work of the salvation of our immortal part; and it is under faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He will and can perform what He has promised, that we carry it on. We ought to make continual use therefore of this spiritual light; it should be a continual daylight to the work of our salvation, our souls and spirits should dwell in it, walk in it, deal in it, work in it, even as our bodies do in the daylight of the sun of this world. We should indeed be children of light.

I have given familiar examples of the way in which we are continually putting to ourselves the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" amid the accidents of this bodily world. Now let me mention a few out of the innumerable cases, in which we should put it concerning our souls and spirits, amid the many and perilous accidents of the spiritual world.

At the very outset we there find a spiritual enemy, strong, cunning, most diligent in his

accursed work. We meet him at every turn. He comes in our front with open violence, behind us with treacherous deceit. If we put him to flight in one shape, he immediately comes back in another; and if for a moment we indulge in the security of standing, of that moment he immediately takes advantage that we may fall. In dealing with such an adversary, have we not reason to cry out continually, "What shall I do to be saved?"

There also we find stumbling-blocks set in the way of godliness, by the powers of this world. We would fain do what is according to the will of God, for we see clearly that it is the will and commandment of God; but the world makes difficulties about it, raises a number of inconveniences; and friends dissuade us out of it, and enemies mock us out of it. How many a work of conscience has thus been laid aside on the excuse of want of means, or of unfavourable season, or other hindrances, which we only wanted the hearty will of a lively faith in the Lord to overcome? In such a situation, have we not continual occasion to ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" and to make continually fresh and fresh practical applications of the answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

There also we find temptations without end. Need I mention them? Who does not know them? And the more Christian experience a person has had, the more he knows as to their

number, their power of persuasion, their deceitfulness, and their danger. At all times, whether we be standing, or sitting, or lying, they beset us in all places; in the public thoroughfare, in the secret chamber, they surround us. Have we not to make head against them? and, if we be careless watchmen, shall we not be speedily surprised and overcome? Verily, we have good excuse in this situation also to ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" and to apply the answer of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why then is this cry made so much more unfrequently in spiritual matters than in bodily? Because men will not open their eyes, as they should, to the world to come, and see by its light. How sad the consequences of such folly! If men shut their eyes to things of this world, they know what they have to expect; and a wall or a ditch will soon disabuse them of their dreaminess. Why, then, should they think that they can go in safety quite blindfold amid the things of the world to come? Is there no danger, because they are blind to the sight of danger?

But the man of true Christian experience, who with open eyes has enjoyed the heavenly light, knows how dangerous it is to walk uncircumspectly: how necessary it is to make all the use possible of the light which He, who is our light, hath given; and how our own corrupt nature dislikes this light, as showing unwel-

come truths, and how the world endeavours to overwhelm it in darkness, and too often succeeds in making it faint, even to the earnest, if they relax a moment from their earnestness. "What shall I do to be saved?" is his anxious question. And the answer to it comes, not from any thing which he can do of himself for himself, but from his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose promise he has of sufficient help, and whose earnest of the Spirit he has regularly experienced in supplies of wisdom and strength, comfort and peace.

But if he shall find reason to cry out in such words as long as the work of salvation lasts, that is, as long as he is kept in this world, what should be the cry of those who have neglected the light, and though they have been told all their lives long, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," have never brought forth any fruit of such faith? Do they desire to be saved? Do the thoughts of another world occupy their hearts? and is the judgment, which will be the entrance into it, and will fix their place in it, before their eyes? Do they think of a Saviour crucified for sin, and crucified again by sinners? of the Holy Spirit given in the fulness of Divine heat and heavenly warmth, to man's cold disobedient heart, and quenched there by indifference and carelessness? of God's glory defiled, his name blasphemed, his day broken, his law set at nought,

his salvation neglected, his mercy made light of, his long-suffering abused? If they ever ask themselves any questions on these things, will it not be followed by the cry. "What shall I do to be saved?" And can they feel in their hearts the answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?" Will the conscience assure them of such faith at the asking? Let them lose no time in falling down in all the humbled conviction of a penitent heart, and cry, "Help mine unbelief." Let them forsake every evil way, and turn unto Him who giveth faith and increaseth faith, and multiplies the seed sown by his word and Spirit in the heart. Then they will find faith that they should be saved; but it must be sought ere it be too late.

But if we be in earnest in the great work which God in his mercy has set before us, we shall be putting to ourselves the question, "What am I doing to be saved?" What signs do I show of such a work going on? They ought to be more in number, and more decided in character, as life goes on. Is the power of sin still more broken? is the corrupt will still more subdued? is the throne of Christ, dwelling in my heart by faith, more established there? Am I more ready to crucify the affections which his law has condemned, to mortify the unruly members, and purify myself as God is pure? May God give us daily a clearer and

more cheerful answer to such questions! And may He who hath brought us out from the inner prison of the captivity of sin and death, and washed our stripes with his own blood, and brought us moreover into his own house, even his Church, and set meat before us there, spiritual food, heavenly sustenance to our souls, may He, our great God and Saviour, further us continually with his all-effectual help, and finally bring us into his everlasting kingdom! There at last shall be a rest from labour, and there an end to the anxious question, "What shall I do to be saved?"

SERMON XXIX.

SINCERITY OF REPENTANCE.

(Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

2 KINGS xxiii. 22.

"Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah."

THERE is something very striking and melancholy in these words. The children of Israel celebrated their last Passover, all being together, and in such a manner as had not been known since the earlier and better days of their possession of the promised land. It was, in fact, the last repentance of God's people, and a lively repentance it seems to have been, to judge from outward tokens. But, alas! it did not continue. Three times already before this, God's people had publicly repented, under the direction of pious princes, which were Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Hezekiah. But now the appointed punisher of their sins was openly

manifested to their sight in the terrible king of Babylon. And like the sick man with death before his eyes, they made earnest protestations of repentance and amendment if God would spare them, and sealed them with the celebration of the Sacrament of the Paschal Supper. But their fear was removed again for a while, and, like too many a sick man, they forgot all their solemn vows and promises, and followed the wicked sons of Josiah, in their sins, as readily as they had obeyed him in his reformation of his people.

Here, then, is before us the example of a fourth publicly-professed repentance, and as ineffectual as the three that went before. Should it not lead us to take very close and scrutinizing views of repentance, and to conclude that there must be something in it besides the present feeling of shame and sorrow, however sharp and lively that may be? There must be some abiding feeling in it, which shame and sorrow naturally are not. For the very sense of them drives us to rid ourselves of them by all means. What then can that be? What does God demand beyond the broken heart? Nothing, if it be indeed broken in his name. But here lies the question. Which does the man think most of, his own personal danger, or God's damaged glory? Which does he lament most, his own loss, or God's rejected love? Has he renounced the sinful selfishness

of his nature? A man may keep this, and yet be overwhelmed with shame and sorrow; he may retain this, and yet manifest the most lively outward marks of repentance. So did Israel; and was led by it into his sins again, and they led him to the final judgment which came upon his head.

Here is the cause of so many apparent repentances in the course of a man's life. Selfish sorrow, selfish shame have wrung his heart, and terrified his conscience. But he has not gone beyond self. He has seen, indeed, the miserable disorder which his sins have wrought in himself in body and in mind. But has he looked out and up to see the miserable disorder which they have also wrought in God's work of love; how they have obscured the brightness of his glory, how they have shaken the faith of his Church, as far as his sphere extends; and who shall tell how far it extends? Here is the principle that is so commonly wanting; here is that which Israel lacked, the heavenly spirit, and not the earthly dregs only. The heart broken indeed upon earth, but broken also in heaven; not weeping for its own loss, though that may be now irreparable, but deploring the damage done to the flock of Christ; not terrified at its own danger, though that may be imminent, and may concern eternal life; but appalled at the jeopardy into which he has brought others, and the despite which

he has done to the saving means of his Redeemer. When the heart has thus been lifted out of itself, divested of its earthliness and carnality, and has risen into heaven to see the majesty which it has affronted, the love which it has rejected, the glory which it has blasphemed, and thence also looks down again upon the scenes of its sin and mischief amongst God's works and people, and sees them with a clear and sharp eye, and lively and enlightened conscience, as becomes a look from above,—then, and not until then, a real repentance has taken place,—then, and not till then, it has a principle of life and continuance,—then, and not till then, it is such as requires not to be renewed by several fits in a man's life, if he live, but extends in one unbroken course to the end of life. And it is the voice of this repentance, having the heart thus in heaven, and seeing as it were even there the dimness brought upon its glory by sin, that says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son." And this it is over which there is joy among the angels in heaven.

Such repentance will abide in its effects. In such the heart of the man is changed, so that he has foregone his old appetites, and, therefore, is out of the way of temptation from his old sins. Even though it should force itself upon

his sight, he will not allow it to gain his attention, but turn away from it with a stern watchfulness against its ensnaring deceitfulness. He sees in it the art of the enemy of the God whom he serves, of the Redeemer whom he loves, of the Holy Spirit whose guidance he follows. And such repentance, therefore, is both the first and the last.

But Israel, we see, made at least four several professions of repentance; and so have many done since. The more frequent they have been, of course the less sincere they have been. And such repentances are more a proof of the folly and selfishness of the man, than of any right and spiritual feeling. They are but the sorrow for having come in for the penalty of his sin at last. And as soon as the infliction shall have been removed, he is ready to sin again. And, indeed, after each successive fit, he is but the more ready, because he wishes to drown the voice of conscience, which exclaims against his yielding again to the old temptation; and it is drowned amid his shouts of enjoyment, until the hour of penalty comes round again; then the note is that of lamentation again. Why, what affronting of the majesty of God Almighty is here! It is treating Him as a mere man, and a very weak man too. It is the silly wickedness of the wayward child that presumes upon the fond indulgence of its father, to suffer him-

self to be cheated by fine professions and by tears, the very falsehood of which stares him in the face.

There are, perhaps, few men who suffer themselves to be led into any sin, who do not at the same time soothe their consciences with the promise of a time of future repentance and amendment. And that they should not really repent and amend, who can wonder? For surely what inconsistency can be greater than saying, as they do to themselves, Now I will undo God's work, but shortly I, even I, will make it up again? Now I will blind myself, but shortly I will give myself my sight again? Now I will go astray, but shortly I will put myself in the right way again? Now I will give myself the plague, but I will shortly cure myself again? After such desperate tampering with the things of eternal life and death; after such systematic cheating of the heart, and such ignorant confidence in his own strength, even at the moment of the most deplorable weakness, and such unfeeling presumption upon God's mercy and long-suffering, what is less likely to ensue than a renewal unto true repentance? and what more likely than a state of mind so crooked, so shaped in every way to self-delusion, that the man of four repentances is even worse than the man who has never repented at all?

And yet with that fourth repentance, perhaps he departs from this world. And, as did Israel

shortly before his time came, he celebrates the sacrament of the last Supper of the Lord; and with such solemnity as he never did in his life before, from the day that he was first invested with the full privileges of a member of the Church of God. O, is not that example of Israel full of terrible admonition? Does it not warn all most plainly, not to put off the day of repentance until the approach of the great and notable day of the Lord? Even then with the judgments of God glaring before him full in the face; and with all his wish to escape them; and with all the apparent zeal and fervour with which he performed the rites of the sacrament of his Paschal Supper; with all the sorrow, and shame, and terror, which were stirring the surface of the flood of the thoughts and feelings of his heart, he was insincere at the depth of its fountains. The event too truly proved it. He sinned again, and was removed from the land in which he was living.

So little can the penitent himself depend upon a repentance which does not begin until God's judgment is at hand. How can a heart which he has taught to cheat him continually, and which, at all events, has never been diligently schooled in spiritual discernment; how shall this, at a moment too of such confusion, at a time too when it is so deeply interested in coming to the more joyful conclusion; how can it, with any certainty, distinguish the sorrow and

fear which arise from the love of self, now that he is in such danger, from the love of God, now that He is resorted to after long forgetfulness? Will it not be too glad to mistake the fear for the love? Will not, indeed, the fear most certainly be there? But must not the presence of the love be very uncertain indeed? Few of those who minister to the sick can be ignorant of examples of apparently sharp and unfeigned repentance, wrought by the apparent approach of death, and gradually, yea, sometimes not even gradually, giving way, dispersing into empty air, at the return of health and strength. Some may have seen two or three instances repeated in the very same person.

All this tells us, what a broken reed men lean upon who trust in a last sickness to any feeling of repentance which they have not felt and cherished in the time of their health. Then judgment was far off, and God was sought therefore from love rather than from fear. Health is the time of strength, for the spirit no less than for the body. Let health then be the season of true repentance, and sickness will be the season of comfort, and the hour of death the season of well-founded hope.

SERMON XXX.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

MATT. xvi. 2.

"He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red."

OUR Lord is here rebuking the Pharisees, not for observing the signs of the weather, but for their hypocrisy and unbelief; because, while they carefully noted the signs of weather in the sky, they neglected the heavenly signs which God in his word, and Jesus in his ministry, had given them, and asked Him for one, just as if He had never given them one at all. He refuses any more to them, but one, which should at once prove the impotency of their malice, and be a sentence of condemnation upon them, even the sign of Jonas, his resurrection from the dead on the third day. And with this dark, but threatening promise, He abandons them to the blindness of their unbelief.

And have we no signs to observe, much more important than those of the weather? and are

they generally observed with any thing like to the same attention and regularity that these are? If the daily works of our body depend so much on the appearance of the sky, and this thing is to be done, or that thing is to be done, according to the tokens of the morning and the evening, have we not also another work in hand, at least ought we not to have? and do not the proper times and seasons of doing its various offices depend upon the various tokens which our watchfulness discerns in the face of that heavenly and spiritual firmament which shines over the head of the Christian, with the Sun of righteousness, the Day-star of promise, and all the lights which our heavenly Father hath set forth to lead us? We have, indeed, such a work, and there are indeed such tokens to be observed; and woe betide the sluggard who lies a-bed, instead of being up, and awake to watch them. He will rise from the bed of the grave in the most fearful astonishment, and see the last sign upon earth, the sign of the Son of man in heaven, with overwhelming dismay. Let us then come to the consideration of the proper observing of these signs.

They are heavenly, and therefore must be seen in a heart which is seeking those things which are above. They are spiritual, and must therefore be observed in the spirit, and under the searching direction of the Holy Spirit. They cannot, therefore, be observed by such as

are not willing to go out of the common walk of this world, and will not withdraw their eyes and ears from its sights and sounds, into the secret of the world to come. Who can wonder that they are observed but by few, out of the multitude that observes the face of the sky in the morning and in the evening?

But after he has observed the signs of the evening sky, and gathered a good omen of the morrow from its redness, there remain other signs for the man of God, and not mere omens by which to guess, but tokens by which to be assured. The time comes for closing the day, and sanctifying the rest of the night by prayer to God. Then he stands before the heaven of heavens, at the footstool of the throne of the Most High. And the signs from heaven, proclaiming to him the great day of the Lord's coming again, appear before him.

First of all he brings, as a good steward to his Lord, an account of the past day. Another day is gone. The day of the Lord is nearer by another day. And is he better prepared for it, by the improvement of another day? What use has he made of his various spiritual means and gifts this day? How has he turned them to the glory of God, and good of his neighbour? Has he lived through it as if in the presence of God, keeping Him in continual remembrance, so that he should be ready for all good, and fearful against all evil? Has the love of his Saviour

constrained him to the keeping of his commandments? Has he applied his sacrifice for sin by presenting his body a living sacrifice to Him, through godly service, through resisting temptation? Has his faith given him a victory over the world, be it ever so small, be it but the abstaining from idle words? and has he suffered no defeat from the powers of the devil, the world, and the flesh?

There also appears before him the sign of the cross of his Saviour, reminding him of his profession, calling him to question as to how he has this day maintained it. Has he crucified every evil affection? Has he taken it up in self-denial, not ashamed of its humiliation, but glorying in its exaltation? Has he hung all his hopes upon it, so that he has found in it comfort to his sorrow, increase to his joy, assured that on it his Saviour won for him the victory over sin and death, and opened the access unto the throne of God, and in virtue of His precious blood shed there, now intercedes for his people?

There appears also before him the sign of the example of his Saviour, which it is his profession to follow. Has he set it before him, like a pillar of fire, to lead him through the night of the wilderness of this world? Does he heedfully follow his steps, treading in his track whithersoever it may lead, assured that if it take him through sorrow for a time, it will end in everlasting joy? Does he exhibit it in him-

self to others? Does he show, as a child of God, his likeness to the first-born brother of the family?

And there appear before him the signs of the times in which he is living, and he considers how they are the harbingers of the last day, and how he must conduct himself accordingly. He must avoid the evil, and make the most of the good. He must not be led away by them, as so many are by the sins of their neighbourhood and vices of their day; he will not choose to think that what all the world around him does cannot be wrong, though the word of God has pronounced it wrong. For Him, not the consent of all the men that have ever lived can avail to alter one tittle of that word. If it condemn, it condemns without exception or excuse.

Here is, indeed, an abundance of signs. And the question with the man of God is, what do they foreshow? Do they prove that he has advanced in his Christian course? Then the heavens are red with joyful signs for the morrow. To-morrow he will go farther still than to-day, work more effectually, strive more prosperously; and to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow shall lead on in bright assurance to the last day of this world, and the first morning of the world to come. The redness of the evening sky may deceive, as we all know, but these signs never can.

And whatsoever the signs of the sky foreshow, we cannot alter. But we may alter that which is threatened by the signs of the spiritual world. When they tell us through the state of our heart that a foul morrow is at hand, it is still possible, by repentance, to alter the face of the spiritual sky, and to look forward in bright hope.

And, in like manner, the true Christian will observe the signs of the morning, as he rises as it were from death unto life again; and he will prepare himself for the day accordingly. Is it red and lowering with the coming storms of trial and temptation? Then he will prepare himself to meet it, and assure himself of a shelter in the protection of his God and Saviour; and the foul weather of sorrow shall be dispersed before the bright beams of his heavenly comfort. So shall the signs of evil be turned into good, and the peace of the day shall be an earnest of the everlasting peace to come.

Surely the Christian desires not any more signs from heaven. The more watchful he is the more he finds that he has already, and the more evident and certain they are. It is the unbeliever, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, that asks for more. What can any one of us, if we do indeed believe, want for our assurance? Do we need a sign to assure us of the forgiveness of our sins? Look inward, and see

whether conscience shows the sign of sins forsaken. Do we need a sign to assure us of our salvation? Look inward, and see whether the heart shows the sign of the work of salvation begun and carried on. None ask for a new sign, but such as never have made account of the signs which have already been given.

The very last has been given, even the very one, the one only, which our Lord promised to the Pharisees and Sadducees. The sign of Jonas has been given, the Son of man has risen from the dead. And the next sign that will be given will be his sign in heaven, as thence He comes in glory to judge the quick and dead. Let all these signs then be diligently observed every day with the lively attention of Christian watchfulness; that they prepare us for witnessing that last tremendous sign, of which the heavens, filled with the throne of the Son of man, and with his train of ten thousands of his angels, shall be full from one end unto the other. So may we see it and not tremble, but rejoice with exceeding joy!

Scripture is full of exhortations to Christian watchfulness; but no where is the duty more forcibly pressed upon our attention than in this conversation of our Lord with unbelievers. You see how He rebukes in them all such as, while they are most anxious observers of outward things, such as the signs of the weather; and are so fretful as to be unable to leave any thing

in the Lord's hands, and would fain take the Lord's work out of his hands, and make the weather too; yet, at the same time, pay no attention to those much more numerous, much more important, much more certain signs which He has shown from heaven, that we may watch them, and prepare ourselves to be ready whensoever He shall come. That work, the most necessary work of preparation, they are not so ready to take out of his hands, though He offers it to them; but they are content to leave it there, or any where. Meanwhile, the spiritual eye, through this neglect, becomes duller and duller, so that it should be less and less able to discern these signs, and the heart grows more and more unwilling rightly to understand such as it cannot help seeing. For instance, the various warnings of the shortening of our days, which every one of common seriousness perceives, both within him and without him, from growing infirmities, wasting strength, and from loss of friends and acquaintance, whom the grave has already taken away; how are these received with a blind eye and deaf ear, and we see them go on towards the grave as insensible as the cattle towards the slaughter-house!

And in this rebuke of our Lord's, let us take serious notice of the manner in which our Lord parts from those worldly-minded, unbelieving sign-seekers; "And He left them and departed." He left them to their unbelief;

He departed from their company and neighbourhood; He cut them off; He had said his last to them; He had done with them for ever in this world; but has He done with them, and the like of them, in the world to come? He will see them; He will speak to them once again, as He utters from his seat of judgment the last irreversible sentence, "Depart, ye cursed." Then He shall leave them for ever and ever to their misery, and they shall depart for ever far asunder from his blessed company, where is light and life, into regions of darkness and death.

Let not then the fleeting appearances, and continually changing signs of this passing world, draw your attention, my friends, from the view and careful consideration of the signs of the times, which call upon us to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Let us be awake, and on the look-out in all the anxiety of Christian watchfulness; and God grant us grace so to wait in all patience of faith, and perseverance of well-doing, that on that day, when the sky shall give its last sign, and the last morning sky shall be red from one end to the other with the dazzling glory of the Lord coming in his kingdom, we may be able to behold the sign of the Son of man with exceeding joy, and accept it as the immediate harbinger of everlasting peace.

SERMON XXXI.

THE LIFE OF LIVING SOUL.

(*Septuagesima Sunday.*)

GEN. ii. 7.

"And God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

THREE degrees are here mentioned in the making of man. (1) God formed his body and limbs in due shape and proportion, as a potter forms a vessel, out of the dust of the earth. (2) To this He gave life, by breathing it into his nostrils; and thus man was added to the number of the creatures having life, which had been created on the fifth and sixth days. He was now at the head of the brutes, being fashioned, especially in his hands, and erect posture on his feet, for having the dominion over them. (3) But God destined him for a higher place still. He intended that he should not only be king of the brutes, but a servant of God. And therefore his creation was finished

by his becoming a living soul. That is, he was added to the number of souls having everlasting life in them, and endued with reason and understanding. Such is the three-fold condition of man. According to this, then, let us consider him.

(1) We are, as to the outward man, mere dust of the ground. Is not this plain enough from experience? Does not the food that maintains our bodies come directly from plants, or indirectly from them, through the beasts that feed upon them? And do not those plants draw all their support from the ground? And when our bodies lose the breath of life, do they not shortly become one with the dust in which they are laid? So fleeting is our nature in this world; so we do pass through it as a shadow, and are gone. So vain is all the care and indulgence bestowed upon our bodies, as if they were our only concern. Nothing can save them from the destruction which in due time must overtake them.

(2) We have in this living body passions and affections common with the brute creation. And too many act as if they had nothing more, as if they had only to exercise their brutal appetites, eat and drink, and tyrannize over the poor brute creation, as its merciless kings, and then like them to die. How many have passed through this world from the womb to the grave, with no higher exercise of their faculties,

and with a much more brutal one of their appetites, than a dog or an elephant ?

(3) But we are living souls. God has given unto us reason, and not instinct; free agency, and not mere necessity. We are rational, and therefore accountable beings. We are servants of a heavenly Master, sons of a heavenly Father, to whom we have to render faithful service and affectionate obedience. We have a reckoning to render of the manner in which we have employed our bodies, our appetites, our faculties. If our high rank is that of highest of the brutes, it is also that of lowest of spiritual intelligences. If we have to rule over the lower creatures, we have to account to a Judge.

And here it is that man has fallen. His spiritual nature requires of him continual communion with God, from whom all his help cometh, his orders proceed, and to whom he must render faithful service. But the arts of Satan broke short off this blessed communion, and man became a rebel instead of a servant, an alien instead of a son, an outcast instead of one of the heavenly family. But, thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, man has been reconciled to God, by his own Son taking our nature upon Him, and at once paying the penalty of our sins, and yielding a perfect obedience; He has restored our human nature to its former innocence and integrity before God, so that we should once again be living souls,

members of the heavenly household, through faith of the Son of God.

Let us consider then. We are become living souls again, being washed by the precious blood of the redeeming Lamb. But where is the proof of this? Ought we not to exhibit it if we have it? And can we have it if we continue in the sins of the natural and unregenerate man, as he is born of the flesh of the first sinner, and do not follow the footsteps of the second Adam, through whom man has been born again of the Spirit of God? Can we be changed from the state of shame of alienation from God, into the state of glory of reconciliation with Him, without manifesting the signs and tokens of that change? Can the seed of God remain in us, and we bring forth the fruits of unrighteousness, and not of the Spirit? No. If we be indeed living souls, and not dead in trespasses and sins; if we be among those blessed beings, who serve and praise God to all eternity, we must show that we have the life within us; not the life of the vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away; not the life which depends upon the meat and drink which perish, which passeth as a shadow, and withereth as the flower of the field; but the life which is in Christ Jesus, the Prince of life, the life everlasting, which Christ hath brought to light through his Gospel; the life which puts us in the rank of immortal chil-

dren of light in the presence of the Almighty God and Father of angels and spirits of just men made perfect. Such a life must be manifested in us by the deeds which necessarily become such a life. They must show that we are not mere flesh and blood, like the rest of the creation, but living souls, inclosed, indeed, in the tabernacle of the body of flesh and blood, but not doing its will, but compelling it to do ours, which is that of our Father in heaven. As a bright light shines through the curtains of a tent at night, and thus manifests itself to all that are without, so should the life within us, which is light also, even as Christ is at once our life and our light, be manifested to the eyes of those who are around us. Is not, indeed, the Christian a light set upon a hill? There can be no works of darkness, therefore, proceeding from him, no signs of death, except of the death unto sin; but all the bright and lively tokens of the new life unto righteousness, all the glorious earnest of a faithful service of everlasting life. He is learning the exercise of that service, practising the lesson of that obedience, which, as a living soul, enclosed in a glorified body, he has to render hereafter for ever. Therefore he takes delight in daily growing in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: he has joy in praising and thanking God with his lips and with his life. He strives continually after closer com-

munion with the divine Fountain of life, through a more faithful stewardship of his gifts; through a more earnest endeavour after a return of his love; through a farther attainment of bright and joyful hope.

Such is the life which we should manifest as living souls. It is peculiar, but so also is our condition, if, indeed, we have accepted it at the hands of a merciful Saviour. But if we be content to lead a life which has no peculiarity to distinguish it from the common run of the lives of the children of the world, then our condition is common with them also. The life of Christ, who died and gave himself for us, that He might purify unto himself a peculiar people, is not in us. If we appear not distinct from the world to the world, then we must be of the world, for the world assuredly knoweth its own. And if we be of the world, then we have in us the death of the world, and not the life which is in Christ Jesus.

And now let us remember that we are living souls, and as such have a judgment to undergo, and to bear its sentence, whether for shame or glory, for ever and ever. We have been lost souls, and shall be lost still, if we let the acceptable time pass by. Our living souls put us infinitely above our fellow-creatures in happiness, if we live indeed in the presence of God as such. But they will also put us infinitely below, if we subject them to the law of the

flesh, instead of the law of the Spirit. The greater the happiness that is promised, the greater must be the misery that is threatened to all responsible beings. If life be set before us, so is death likewise. To judgment, therefore, we ought to look, for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. How is it possible to be a good and faithful steward, and keep no accounts, nor ever prepare against a day of account? And the more faithful a steward is, the more pleasure he will have in the strictness of his accounts, and in the prospect of the day of reckoning. It will have no terrors for him. On the contrary, he looks forward to the joyful sound of the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And they shall introduce him into a higher post of service than before.

It were bad enough to miss that higher post, as being found unqualified, and to be put in none at all. But there is a post as low as the other is high, and there is none between; for what is not good is bad, and he who is not with the Lord is against Him. The works which we do are either yea or no as to his service, and cannot possibly be yea and no. And so it must be in the life to come. There will be no middle place between rewarded servants and punished rebels. And all this infinite difference, utterly

immeasurable by the utmost stretch of our imagination, depends upon the finite space of this life, which we can measure in a minute, by counting up threescore years and ten, which is so short and unsubstantial, that Scripture compares it with a flower, a vapour, and a shadow.

May we have grace to live in a state of suitable preparation for that day, when man shall be formed again by God, being raised out of the dust of the ground into which he had fallen, and having the breath of eternal life breathed into his nostrils, and being made a living soul, in the temple of a glorious body, to dwell with his Saviour in his heavenly kingdom, for ever and ever!

SERMON XXXII.

THE MAN OF CHRIST.

1 Cor. iii. 23.

"And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

The very first thing that the Gospel of Christ casts out of the heart of man is the evil spirit of selfishness. So opposed is its nature to his laws in every thing, that even if a man should seek salvation of his own mere account only, he would assuredly miss it. The glory of God, and the welfare of his fellow-men, must be taken into the account also. He must not think to live to himself alone hereafter any more than here, but now and for ever unto the Lord. Otherwise, he has not made that entire surrender of himself, with all his heart and will, which Christ demands of all whom He has bought with his most precious blood. He makes himself still his own. But are we not told, in this very epistle, "Ye are not your own, for ye have been bought with a price[1]?"

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

So then, the Christian is neither his own, nor any other man's, but Christ's only. He was the slave of sin. But Christ came, and bought him to be his own slave; and as earnestly as he formerly performed the taskwork of sin, he must now perform the commandments of Christ. His very title of Christian signifies that he is Christ's. He is a soldier, that has been enlisted under the banner of the Captain of salvation; his orders, therefore, he must obey. He is a sheep that belongs to the flock of the great Shepherd of souls, Him therefore he must follow. He is a fig-tree, dug round, manured, and watered by the hands of Christ; he must therefore answer to his pains. He is a branch of the vine which is Christ, therefore he has nothing of his own; nothing but what he draws from the tree, and all must be done in him, according to the nature of the tree; and he must bring forth the good fruit of the will of Christ, and not the sour grapes of his own wild will. He is a temple, in which Christ dwelleth by faith, and therefore all that is done in him must be the appropriate service of that temple; must be the sacrifice and thanksgiving offerings of a contrite heart and renewed spirit. He is one of the people of the kingdom of heaven, whereof Christ is King, and therefore he must be obedient to his laws. He is a lively stone in the wall of the temple of his Church; and as the stone presses in harmony with all the rest,

according to the plan of the builder, so must he be entirely directed by the rule of Christ.

Thus, in every way, he is indeed Christ's, and not his own. He has foregone all property in himself, and given himself up in full, indisputable ownership to the Lord. Such is his profession. Should not such then be also his practice?

But here comes in another master to dispute the ownership. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are unwilling, of course, to lose their faithful and obedient slave, and make a continual struggle to have him back in their possession again. He is thus set between two masters, both of whom he cannot obey; but he must either hate the one and love the other, or else hold to the one and despise the other. And thus the sum of the Christian life is made up of resistances to the one, and endeavours to obey the other.

Yet how little is this position considered! Christ's though a man be, he has to strive continually to maintain and prove himself such, and much exercise must he have of godly jealousy, and much of spiritual watchfulness, to keep himself in the way of his Lord's commandments; and he must, by experience and use of heavenly grace, attain unto a conscience, so quick, so lively, so wide awake, that it may give him the alarm whenever the danger of temptation is at hand. So that when he is about to yield to the persuasion of evil men, it

may cry out, "Thou art Christ's." When he is tempted to waste precious talents, precious time, it may cry aloud in his ear, "Thou art Christ's." When he is led to put confidence in any thing of this world, it may cry out, "Thou art Christ's." When he is brought to a stand-still of doubt and perplexity by force of temptation, it may break up the delusion, and set him free, crying, "Thou art Christ's."

Yes! this is the battle-cry of the Christian. This he must both repeat continually in his own ears, and shout aloud and defyingly in the ears of his enemies, "I am Christ's." Bow down to his law all ye rebel passions of my heart, all ye unruly affections, all ye vain and ungodly thoughts, He must and shall be obeyed. I am his who was crucified for the world, therefore I must be crucified to the world, and the world to me. I am his who died for sin, therefore I must die unto sin, and mortify my members which are upon earth, presenting my body a vessel of sanctification and honour. I am his who liveth for ever, and I must live unto God, and unto righteousness, that I may live for ever together with Him.

So quick should be the Christian's conscience. But how often is its voice neglected, until at last it ceases to plead? Instead of rendering it more lively, and becoming also more lively to the sound of its voice, by careful listening to its warnings, and diligent performance of its suggestions; instead of putting to

account the word of God and grace of the Holy Spirit, in educating and informing it, so that it should be an oracle of God within us, which may give us good advice and heavenly counsel, on every occasion of difficulty and danger; how is it too often treated? It is brought up in a school of worldly-minded compliance, to approve where it ought to condemn, and, where it cannot do that, to wink. It is turned into a heathen oracle, dealing in doubtful and deceitful answers; providing, like that, a way of escape by the most paltry equivocation. Hence, day by day, it becomes less true, less quick; and, instead of being a true light to the mind, at sea and in tempest, is a false light, set upon shoals and rocks, to lure it to the shipwreck of its faith. Men are apt to plead conscience; but they had much better leave such a witness alone, if they shall have trained it up in artful evasion, and not nursed it up in the strict and straightforward adherence to the commandments of God. Its testimony will assuredly break down when brought into that court, where all hearts are open, and all desires known.

So watchful over the thoughts and intents of their heart, must be they that claim to be Christ's. They profess to have set Him up there, upon his kingly throne, that all within may stand in his presence, and bow before his sceptre. And they profess that all their words and deeds go forth commissioned from that

inward throne of his, on the messages of his commandments, on the service of love toward man for his sake, and glory to God in the highest. And now behold the privilege attending upon the holding fast such a profession.

Christ is God's. Thus is opened a regular chain of communication between man and God. Christ is God's; being, in his Divine nature, the Son of God, and, in his human nature, his minister to the salvation of man, doing every thing that was appointed unto Him, even to the laying down his life upon the cross, and even now still ministering in his intercession for all such as call upon his name. He is one with the Father; all his are the Father's, and all the Father's are his. He, therefore, that is Christ's, is also God's. See therefore the end of him that hath surrendered himself in faith into the hands of Christ, to be his property for ever and ever: he becomes the property of God also.

But is not every man, as well as every thing, God's property already? Assuredly; but not in that peculiar way of which we are now speaking. That vessel which the potter has made, and is holding in his hand, is undoubtedly his, as much as any thing can be. But if he fling it away from him, it can hardly be called his, at least in the same sense as before. And thus all men, bad and good, are God's, as made and sustained by Him. But when He

hath cast out the bad from his presence for ever, can they be called his, in the same sense as the good, whom He keeps in his presence, and feeds from his hand of continual bounty for ever and ever? Israel, to speak of his visible Church only, was once his. Can he be called so still? Has he not been rejected? is he not an outcast?

O what a comfort to the man of God, thus to be assured that he is God's peculiar property, and, amid all the shocks and changes which this world shall undergo, shall never be lost! He shall be always in his eye, as a precious thing which must never be missing. And He will give his angels charge concerning him, to keep him in all his ways. And even when his body shall be mingled with the dust of the earth, it shall still be existent in his sight, as the precious seed of the body, which He will raise in glory at the last day, and keep by Him in his heavenly habitation for ever. Who shall take any thing out of the hand of God? Who shall rob Him of his property?

These are cheerful thoughts to the man of God. And as melancholy, when he is really set down to them, by the desertion of the world which he has loved and served, are the thoughts of the man who is not of God. It is miserable enough, if, in such an hour, he find himself to be no one's, see no one to protect him when all are against him, no one to care for him when

all on earth have ceased to care for him, no one to love him when all hate him, no one to receive him when all have abandoned him. Frightful enough is such desolation of the heart as this. But when from such reflections he goes deeper still into the melancholy truth, and finds himself become the property of the irreconcileable adversary of God, bound hand and foot as his captive, to be his, and his only, in his horrible habitation for ever and ever, O what heart shall conceive his misery!

Therefore the more, having these opposite examples before us, let us strive continually to make good our profession as Christ's, that we may be also God's. Let us empty our hearts of all vain thoughts and corrupt affections, which bring us under the power of the prince of this world; let us open them to the word of God; let us subject them to the motions of his Holy Spirit; let us be diligent, temperate, watchful, patient in well-doing, serving the Lord, and thus commit ourselves into his keeping as a faithful Creator's, who having created us, will, on his part, perform his covenant, and create us again at the last day, never to be taken out of his hands again by the fraud and malice of the devil, but to be reserved unto everlasting life, still being Christ's, who is the King of glory, and dwelling together with Him, and through Him being God's, for ever and ever, world without end.

SERMON XXXIII.

CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION.

(Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.)

PHIL. iii. 20.

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

THERE is a city, but it is not upon earth, nor founded by man, nor inhabited by mere children of Adam; but a heavenly city, whose builder and maker is God, and where the saints of God are fellow-citizens with one another; a holy city, a beloved city, where Jesus Christ is king, sitting at the right hand of the Father, in glory. And we, who have been baptized in his name, have been made free of this city, and as many of us as are living according to the covenant of that baptism, are enjoying its privileges, and doing the duties required by so glorious a citizenship. We can, indeed, at present, be there but in the spirit; but our life in the body must be a looking forward, even as Abra-

ham looked to it as the place of rest, after sojourning in a strange country; and especially as sending forth from its everlasting gates, Jesus Christ, with his company of angels, in great glory, at the last day; when He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, and be with Him for evermore.

It is with such a view before him that St. Paul speaks the words of the text. "Our conversation is in heaven," he says. Where the word "conversation" denotes very much more, indeed, than it does in common language. It not only signifies the character and habits of a man among his friends and neighbours, but chiefly, and in the very first instance, the way in which he performs his duties, and exercises his privileges as a citizen. He means, therefore, to say, "your grand concern is not an earthly, but a heavenly citizenship; and, therefore, you must not be minding earthly things, but heavenly things. Your daily walk must be in heaven, and your daily hope and encouragement the coming thence of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. So will your conversation be that of a fellow-citizen of the saints, and such as becometh the Gospel of Christ."

What a high calling does he exhort us to fulfil! How shall we be excused if we neglect to make such our calling and election sure? What a high value do many men set on being

admitted to the freedom of an earthly city! What a bustle do they make about exercising its duties, rights, and privileges! How proud of the honour when their zeal, integrity, and public spirit is solemnly acknowledged! And yet all this in itself is but a minding of earthly things. Shall not then the Christian value his admission to the freedom of the heavenly city? And freedom, indeed, it may here well be called; for all who exercise it have had broken for them the straitening yoke of the neck, the galling staff of the shoulder, which sin had fastened upon them. They are free, indeed, with the liberty with which Christ hath made them free, having purchased it for them with the ransom of his precious blood. Shall not he exercise all diligence in putting to account such a station? shall he not be zealous, shall he not be watchful as to his duties, jealous as to his rights, mindful of his privileges, lest he be robbed of them by the great enemy? And shall not he value the approbation of the King of that city, Jesus Christ the Saviour; who, on the great day of account, will publicly, in the face of assembled men and angels, acknowledge the faithful services of the true fellow-citizens of the saints?

My brethren, nothing can be done by us now in a corner, whether faithful or unfaithful; we are, by our Christian profession, public characters. As citizens of a heavenly and spiritual

city, we have the inmost thoughts of our hearts open and public; and we cannot say or do any thing which, in one way or another, has not to do with the account which we must one day render to the King of that city. A man must surely be continually on the spot of his calling; therefore our conversation must be in heaven. There is our calling; and there accordingly we must be in our hearts and minds; there in the presence of our King, as servants at the work which He has set us.

And observe that the Apostle says, not *let* "your conversation be in heaven," but "your conversation *is* in heaven." He takes it for granted from the Christian, there can be no doubt about the matter. His station is fixed, his calling is decided, his character is established. There is no yea and nay in the business. He does not exhort us to do, but supposes us to be doing. Let us bear this distinction especially in mind, and ask ourselves what spirit we are of. Are we of that which maintains itself in the Heavenly Presence? for this is the Christian spirit. Enabled by faith in the Saviour Jesus Christ, it rises, as on eagle-wings, and finds its dwelling-place in the city of the living God. Abiding under the eye of the everlasting King there, it sees both the height of his love and the depth of his judgments; and therefore sets its face against sin, which is contrary to all that it experiences there,

is acutely felt to be the enemy of eternal peace. There it finds a shelter from temptation, a haven from the storms of life, an earnest of everlasting rest. This presence of conversation in heaven causes, of course, an absence from the earthly things of sin. The Apostle condemns those who mind earthly things, that is, give themselves up to sinful affections, and live to the world. And in another place he says to Christians, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God [1]." Now the life which abides in man is in his soul and spirit. His spirit, therefore, being removed from this world of sin, and having its conversation in heaven, the man is dead to this world, and his life being with his spirit, has, from the moment of such death, been hidden with Christ, in his heavenly city, where He sitteth at the right hand of God. Oh! when we come down from the height of such considerations, and compare the Christian profession with its general practice, can we wonder at those expressions in Scripture which represent the Christian life as a warfare against most persevering and powerful enemies, as a stewardship under most fearful responsibility for the precious treasures which have been committed to it, and bid us be watchful and instant in prayer for help to enable us amidst so obstinate a struggle? For surely we see

[1] Col. iii. 3.

any thing but general signs of such a thing as citizenship in heaven. Alas! much, very much, of the contrary. Yet on this account we should only strive the more, seeing that conversation is neither to be gained nor maintained together with conversation in a sinful world; but that before we can exercise the one, we must desist from the other. May the Lord direct our hearts and minds, so that we may refuse the evil and choose the good!

One especial part of our heavenly conversation is mentioned in the text. It is the looking to our Lord Jesus Christ coming from heaven as our Saviour, to change our bodies from the vileness of mortality to the glory of immortality. He is our life, and when He shall appear, then we, if our lives shall have been hidden with Him, shall also appear together with Him in glory. And if we indeed know ourselves, having examined our heart, and questioned our conscience, and hidden nothing in self-delusion and hypocrisy from ourselves, then the joyful hope and long-suffering patience with which we look forward to that day, are a sure earnest of the blessedness to come. O if men would but keep that day continually in mind, and in such a mind too, how many sins would never have been committed, how much would have been spared from appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ! What a voice of warning does it raise, how loud, how distinct!

Heaven, it says, will send forth Jesus Christ. Therefore be prepared for Him by having your conversation in heaven; be with Him there in spirit, that then ye may appear together with Him in glory. Quit the sin that so easily besetteth, escape from the snare and trap of the devil, crucify the world of sin, present your body a living sacrifice unto the Lord. Take your heart from the things of earth, set your affections on things above. Live as in the presence of Christ, as standing in the heavenly city before his throne, like the angels that wait to do his commandments. Whatever thought comes into your heart, remember that He sees it, and that you take it in to cherish, or drive it out, under his eyes. Can you then take in thoughts which He abhors, and will judge with fiery judgment; or can you drive away thoughts which savour of Him and his Spirit of grace? And still more, whatever you do, remember that it is done openly in his sight; and if it be evil, is a direct affront to his majesty, a daring defiance of his power, a thankless casting of dulness on the brightness of his glory. He is coming as our Saviour to raise us from death to life. Shall we not be prepared to appear together with Him?

Heaven is still open. Its everlasting doors have not yet been shut. Our spirits can still enter that city, and dwell there, and enjoy the peace which passeth all the understanding of

this world. There we can still be fellow-citizens of the saints, in all joy, and join their song of praise and thanksgiving. What a glorious privilege to mortal man, what a merciful condescension to a creature born in sin! Shall we not avail ourselves of such a gracious calling? Shall heaven, the place of eternal happiness and glory, have no pleasures for us? Shall heaven, into which every one that has a single thought in his heart concerning the world to come, desires to enter, and hopes to enjoy it, when the body shall be raised again, shall it not be an object of delight now, when it is freely open to our spirits? Can we be fit for it hereafter, if we keep ourselves in unfitness now? Can our bodies enter then, if our spirits refuse now?

O let us have our conversation there, let us thankfully exercise the glorious privilege to which we have been so mercifully called, taken out of the dust and mire of the earth to sit in heavenly places! Our gracious Lord would not lose us from his sight. It pains and grieves Him to see our places empty in that city. And if they be empty there, where are we filling them? Where, indeed! Should we not tremble at the answer to such a question? What should we think of the man who, when he was invited to the house of a mighty wise and good king, chose rather to live in the society of the most low and profligate beggars?

Yet such is he who, when called to a state of holy conversation in heaven, chooses rather to abide in a state of sin. He is filling a place in the seats of the ungodly; he is found in the haunts of iniquity and disobedience, while he might have been sitting as fellow-citizen of the saints, and is missing from the ranks of the servants that look upon the face of their Lord, in the city built by God.

O may that gracious Lord ever have us in his presence; may He, through his Holy Spirit, endue us with such a spirit of watchfulness and perseverance, that we may ever hold fast the place which He hath so mercifully assigned us in his Church, that we may obtain in the world to come a place whence we never can be removed, and a blessedness to which there shall never be an end!

SERMON XXXIV.

THE CHRISTIAN NOT OF THE CROWD.

LUKE xix. 5.

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

HERE is one of those gracious calls of our Saviour, who knows what is in the heart of man, and therefore often chooses first him whom his fellow-men had put last. He saw in the heart of Zacchæus that repentance and desire of amendment, sinner though he was reckoned, which the self-righteous Pharisees had no thought of; and they were mad with anger at the honour and preference which the Lord showed him. Not but that Zacchæus gave an outward sign also of his interest in the Lord. We see that he was so desirous of seeing Him, that he climbed into a tree, that he might not be hindered by the crowd. He sought to see Jesus, who He was, what He looked like, what was the countenance and the person of

Him who had given sight to the blind, healed the paralytic, raised the dead, fed the five thousand, and done all the other innumerable signs and wonders, which testified to him as sent from God.

But since that day Jesus hath ransomed man upon the cross—He hath risen from the dead—He hath ascended into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God, the King and High-priest of his Church, until He shall return in the same glory wherein He ascended, to raise the dead, to judge mankind, and receive his people into his everlasting rest. Shall we have no interest in Him? Shall we not desire to see of Him all that we can? We cannot, indeed, with all our endeavours and reaching upward, see his countenance and person, as Zacchæus did, by mounting into a tree; but we may see much more than he did, who saw Him but in the flesh, not yet glorified. We may see Him in Spirit, we may behold Him through faith, and in such glory as Zacchæus had not power to conceive. We may have in our hearts the tokens of his presence, and we may receive from Him the earnest of that glory with which He will clothe his people, that they may be like unto Him. We may indeed see Him who He is, and confess in thankful adoration that He is our Lord and King, our Mediator and Redeemer, our Saviour from death to life, from bonds of sin to crowns of glory, even the Son

of God in glory at the right hand of the Father, who liveth for ever, to make intercession for us.

But how are we to see all this? Are we not in a crowd? Yes; for, alas! the crowd in the very Church of God, where Christ is the spectacle for all eyes, is but too like other crowds. It turns the occasion to its own amusements, much in the same way as you will see the multitude make a fair, a drinking-bout, a mountebank's exhibition, a business of gambling, out of the occasion of some public spectacle; or as (to come nearer to the point) you will find them turning the solemn festivals of Christmas and Whitsuntide to carnal merry-making and low debauchery. Is the crowd of those who call themselves Christians so different from the crowd of the world, that they keep the grand object always before their eyes? Can it be said that they are reverently looking on Christ with eyes of dutiful love and watchful zeal? "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so do their eyes wait upon the Lord their God[1]." Are they seeking the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God? Are all chosen that have been called? Is the road broad, and the gate wide, that leadeth to eternal life, and do thronging multitudes seek it? We know that

[1] Psalm cxxiii. 2.

this is not true, but rather the contrary. The multitude of Christians is indifferent to the object, to the interests, to the practice of their professed faith. They seek, first of all, the meat, the drink, the raiment, and leave the kingdom of God and his righteousness, to come in for their share of attention as they can. The by-work is made the work, the play is made the occupation. There is a sleepiness, a forgetfulness, as to the things of God and Christ. But what activity, what readiness of mind, as to the concerns of Mammon and Belial! With what numbers is their Christianity but an accident, which befel them at their birth! and they are over-growing it, and wearing out its effects every day of their life. See how generally the loud calls of God upon his people are neglected, how continually his most awful warnings are despised! How He is weekly robbed of his Sabbaths, daily robbed of his tribute of praise and thanksgiving, hourly robbed of the offering of holy thought, thankful ejaculation, faithful resignation, by thousands!

Can the man, who is content to stand amid such a crowd, either see Christ, or be seen of Christ? Can the attention, which is so intently given to things immediately around, fixed upon the world and the flesh, kept down upon the things of earth, can this be lifted up, and fixed upon Christ, as He moves among us through his spiritual presence, as He sits above us bodily

at the right hand of God? No. The true Christian is not found in the crowd. He is not one in many, but one out of many. He is distinguished by a peculiar position. As Zacchæus lifted himself above the heads of the crowd, by climbing up into the tree, in order to see Christ, so whosoever is desirous of seeing Christ, and receiving from Him the blessed acknowledgment, "To-day I must abide at thy house:" (and this desire marks the true Christian most,) must show himself distinct from the crowd, and above the crowd.

But then again, after they have begun to entertain something like a wish and desire, do not many desist, from the fear of being thought singular, from the dread of appearing unlike other people? If the world were all truly Christian, they would indeed gladly go along with it, and heartily may wish that it were so, for their own sakes. But if it be unchristian, they will not stand aloof from it. They dare not make themselves so conspicuous. And yet what rules of modesty will not people break, what public notice will they not brave, when some attractive spectacle of this world's pomp and splendour is to be seen! Then the man of gravity, then the female of delicacy, are seen to make no scruples of mounting up above the heads of the crowd into the most preposterous and ludicrous positions. They defy remarks—they are even proud of this proof of the in-

terest which they take in the pageant of the day. O that any thing like such a spirit were manifested throughout the Church of God, that there were such a struggle to mount and obtain a clear view of Christ, such a boast of having seen Him, such a contempt of the world's ridicule! And He is not the pageant and wonder of a day, which lives one day longer in the newspapers, and about nine more in the public talk and memory, and is then forgotten for ever. The sight of Christ is never forgotten. It is never even lost by such as have once seen Him in the clearness of spiritual eye, which is afforded by the faith of a heart enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and honest and sincere in its purpose of seeking the things which are above. To them He is continually visible, as the way, the truth, and the life. They do not see Him merely pass along. For, even as was Zacchæus, they are seen also by Him. And with joy they hear his acknowledgment of them, "To-day I must abide at thy house." And He dwells in their hearts by faith. There they receive Him with a feast of thanksgiving, open to Him all the treasures of their thoughts, spread before Him all the delicacies of their affections and desires. He had to depart from the house of Zacchæus. But from that dwelling He never departs, and never will depart.

But what is the seeing Christ? It is the

putting ourselves in his presence by an act of faith, and maintaining ourselves there by the practice of faith in walking in his ways, both in thought, and word, and deed. Is not the man who lives such a life distinguished from the multitude, both before the eyes of men, and of Christ? The former see his good deeds, the latter sees his good thoughts also. And surely if the world to come shall be different from this world, the child of the world to come must be different from the child of this world. And if the spirit be different from the flesh, he that is sowing to the spirit must be different from him that is sowing to the flesh. All know this well, all can immediately distinguish one from the other, as one of the crowd might have distinguished Zacchæus on the tree from the man that was under it. And the consciences of all approve the one, and condemn the other. Why then do not all follow the example which they approve, and strive to climb the height of Christian excellence, whence they may see their Saviour, and be seen of Him clearly, and continually; whence they may see Him from his cross, through his throne of intercession, to his judgment-seat, and He may see them from their death unto sin, through their life unto righteousness, to their dwelling in his house for ever? Why should not this precious communication between Christ and his people be general? Can they have faith, or love, who

will not put themselves to any trouble to see Christ? Had Zacchæus not been in earnest he would never have thought of the tree; and even if he had been nothing more than curious, he might have feared the danger of so frail and so conspicuous a position. He might have looked at it with a notion of climbing, and then on consideration given up the notion. And so it is with many. They wish and yet they decline to mount the height which would give them the full view of Christ. They are afraid of worldly consequences. And they set not sufficient value on the heavenly.

But is it not the desire of every one, who allows himself serious moments of thought on that which is to become of him, to be entertained by Christ in the house of his heavenly Father, and there to be set down to the feast of eternal life and glory, in company with all the children of God, and brethren of Christ? And has not Christ declared that He must be entertained in this world by those whom He will entertain in the world to come, both by being taken to dwell in the heart by faith, and by being represented by every brother, to whom, through that faith, they exhibit deeds of Christian love? And does He not invite Himself, saying, "To-day I must abide at thy house," and thus honour with his heavenly presence the spiritual feast which is made for Him by all who, like Zacchæus, are eager to set their eyes

to do the remaining three quarters by working three times as hard in the last half. Though, indeed, none but a very careless person would throw himself on such unnecessary toil and doubtful chance as this.

But what are we to do in the case of the work set us by God? Man can claim but part of our time, and if we fail in it, we can satisfy him by giving him out of the time which is still our own; we may stay later in the evening, for coming late in the morning, for instance. But all our time, all our years, with all their days, evenings and mornings, hours, minutes, and moments, are the Lord's. Whence then are we to satisfy Him for any that we lose? And our work is of that nature, that we cannot in any way manage that one part done beyond what is required, should make amends for another part done below what is required, because the Lord requires the very utmost that we can do. If we have not worked heartily, we have done nothing that He will approve. And while in the work of this world only, a man may be three times as good a workman as he was before by becoming thrice as industrious; in the work of the world to come, if he is not industrious, he is corrupt by nature; and his becoming three times as industrious will only produce three times as corrupt and bad work, unless indeed meanwhile his nature be completely changed.

Yes; there lies the explanation of all this difficulty. In our corrupt nature such a thing as redeeming the time before God is as impossible as any thing that we can hold to be so. But in our regenerate nature the case is quite altered; and therefore the Apostle calls upon the Christian to redeem the time; and St. Peter says to a like purpose, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he should no longer lead the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; for the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles[1]," &c. Where you see plainly the foundation laid of this redemption of time. Christ hath died, that we may be dead unto sin, and in our new nature, which rises together with Him unto righteousness out of this death, we must live the rest of our time to the will of God. We ought, all of us, as Christians, to be doing the works of this new nature, and if we shall have truly repented, the time past will have sufficed for working the will of the Gentiles, and our time will never be so misspent again.

These considerations have led us to the real sense of the term, "Redeeming the time."

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2, 3.

Redeeming means buying back again. A man redeems his estate when he pays off a debt that covered it; that is, when in fact he buys it back again. But then, how is man to buy time back again? Time is God's. With what then shall man buy it? All that man has is God's. What shall he pay Him, then, which is not his already? But is there nobody to buy it for him? Is there nobody who has something of his own, which the Father will accept as a ransom? Need I to tell you, my brethren, that Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of the Father, hath bought us, and, together with us, hath bought for us time and eternity; time in which to work out our salvation, eternity in which to enjoy it?

And now, much as we hear of the preciousness of time, can we have a sufficient notion of its preciousness? The time for man's work of salvation was gone by indeed, spent in wicked forgetfulness of God. And not with all the riches of this world, if he had them, and not with tears of repentance many as all the waters of this world, if he could shed them, could he buy it back again. It was gone beyond all recovery, as the things which are dead and gone. He might have it in his memory, indeed, and so might he have the dead; but now it has come back again among the things which have risen again to us out of the grave of Christ. Christ hath brought it up again from the region

of the things of nought. Shall it not be precious to us? Can we abuse it, and not be guilty of undervaluing his most precious blood?

Such is the nature of the Christian's time. It is "redeemed time," which he is to put to the account of the work of his redemption. He is to put it to its utmost use; he is to consider every moment that is left to him for repentance, for spiritual growth, for living to the will of God, in the faith of Jesus Christ, as bought by so much part of the price with which the Son of God hath satisfied the Father. Hours, indeed, there must be left for the refreshment and relaxation of this body of flesh and blood; and the maintenance of it in good health, which cannot be without such means, is necessary to the fulness of our work of living in it to the will of God. But even at such moments we must take good heed, (and the more so, because, from their close concern with the flesh, they are the most unguarded of all,) that we be seeking their main object, which is an active body and vigorous faculties, which shall ably second our spirit in doing the work of the Lord. I say nothing of the time given to the work, and duties of our station, because these, if done by us, not as men-pleasers, nor mere pleasers of ourselves, but with a good conscience, as servants under the eye of our heavenly Master, doing our portion which He has assigned us in the work of carrying on his world; these, I say,

are part and parcel of the great work of our salvation, being God's husbandry to us.

But see the value of time as it should be in the eye of the Christian. How can he have the heart to spend it in vain, to throw it away upon things of nought! And yet men can talk jocosely of time, which has been so mercifully prolonged to them for the work of salvation, as the enemy. Can they seriously consider the love of Christ? And they can lightly talk of killing time. Have they never thought how much such light and unthankful expressions savour of a compliance with killing Christ? But if the Christian be forbidden to have his time unemployed, how much more to have it misemployed! How can he have the heart to give its precious moments to sinful excesses, to the undoing the work of his salvation? Do not moments so shockingly misemployed cry out each with a voice as of a drop of the precious blood of Christ, shed not only in vain, but by malicious intention? And drop falls after drop to the ground, despised and rejected, as He is thus crucified afresh, until all be poured out, and there remain no more sacrifice for sin; and when the time which should have been redeemed is out, where is he? If passed to the next world, his condition is too horrible to think of. If he still be numbered with the living, is he not come to that pass, that the Lord should say of him, as He does of those

who have refused when He called, "They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof; therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices[1]?" and accordingly, he is left to himself; and while, perhaps, he is boasting, as unbelievers so commonly do, of superior light and wisdom, he is living under the judgment of a seared conscience, of a gross heart, of a blinded understanding, of depraved affections, of a rebellious will.

"Redeem the time," cries the Apostle to us; and surely there will shortly be time no more to the longest liver among us. Shall, then, the work of this world have its time so carefully measured out; shall days be appointed and hours kept; shall clocks be carefully observed by the eye; shall bells be diligently attended to by the ear; shall men rise early and late take rest, and give up all the time between, grudging the loss of a moment to such work, and meanwhile shall the work of salvation stand still? shall even the few hours in a week required for its public operation in this place be grudged by too many, its stated time be unobserved, and its warning bells be heard with indifference and neglect? Why is this? Have they finished the work of salvation? Have they nothing carnal to leave off, have they

[1] Prov. i. 30, 31.

nothing spiritual to acquire? Is their peace with God, through Christ, assured for ever? Are they models of blameless conversation, of spiritual watchfulness, and diligence of godly service? Is their faith so confirmed in the heart, that they have grown beyond the cry of "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief?" Alas! alas! can they be taunted in language more severe than such a description as this?

Such as refuse to redeem the time, proclaim one of two things, either that they have done the work of salvation, or that they never intend to begin. No one will, indeed, proclaim this in so many words, nor even so much as whisper it to his own heart. But their lives proclaim it. By them they say, either that they think themselves quite good enough already, or that they never mean to mend. The former of these two is far the more common assertion. Men, who have never seriously considered their spiritual state, and applied to it the word of God, become so accustomed to the sight of what is going on in this world, and have so little notion how contrary its walk is to that of God's commandments, that they disapprove of scarcely any thing in it, but what they find it disapprove. They see no sin but in those things, which it for its own ease and safety, and not from any fear or love of God, condemns for crimes, or brands as disgraces. They consider themselves as good people, at least quite good

enough, in any reasonable consideration, living in good days, as the world goes, whatever sour and gloomy people may say.

But St. Paul contradicts them in express words, "Redeem the time," he says. And why? "Because the days are evil." His words are meant for all times, as long as there shall be a Christian on the face of the earth, and that is to the end of the world. And the spiritual discernment of the Christian, piercing with its quick clear insight into the true state of things, ever has confessed, and ever will confess, the truth of these words, which contain in so narrow a compass the vast sum of his painful experience. Are not all the days which the sun shall have measured out to man, from the moment of his lamp of light being set up in the sky, to the moment of its being quenched in darkness, at the end of all things; are they not all full of peril to the soul and spirit of man? Does not the child of God find in them, not his enjoyment, but his trial? Do they not trespass upon his precious time with all manner of hindrances and interruptions? They are full to him of things which he must shun; they surround him with continual perils, from which he must escape. They grieve him with their unceasing temptations to renounce his calling, to throw up his heavenly work, to be devoted to them, and do theirs. Here is this to be done, they say; there is that to be done; and

nothing else, no, not the work of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, say they, shall be seriously begun until these shall have been all completely done.

From such days the Christian has to redeem his time as out of a land of captivity; to keep it clear of their widening and greedy whirlpool, that it be not sucked in and lost in the abyss. Remembering who hath obtained it for him, what a precious gift from God it is; and how his salvation to eternity depends upon its employment, he will use it in walking circumspectly through the perilous paths of this life; wise unto God, however a fool to sinful man. And then, at the last day, when the powers of darkness shall be overthrown, he will rejoice in having redeemed the time, in having overcome evil days; and shall enter upon an eternity of happy and good days, in the presence of the Lord, who redeemed him.

THE END.

GILBERT & RIVINGTON, Printers, St. John's Square, London.